

PULSE

Screenplay by
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based on
the Japanese Film
"Kairo (Circuit)"
by
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Revised Draft
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EXT. COLLEGE CAMPUS - DUSK

A quiet campus of old stone buildings. It's dusk and we see a student coming along a tree-lined sidewalk, heading for the library at the far end of the mall. Just turned twenty. Needs a haircut. Needs a smoke. JOSH.

He comes past a bike rack. There's a rusty old three-speed that's been U-bolted and forgotten and stripped of its tires by vandals. It has a cracked side mirror and reflected in it Josh sees a *STRANGE BLUR of MOVEMENT* behind him.

He slows to a stop, turns and stares down the sidewalk.

Nothing there.

But he watches a good while longer as though something might appear, might simply be hiding - behind that tree, behind those bushes - waiting for him to turn around.

Or maybe not. He continues walking. And we see the lights along the sidewalk come on, that invisible threshold of darkness reached.

INT. LIBRARY - CONTINUOUS

A black SECURITY GUARD sitting at a monitor console. Josh comes through the metal detector. It BEEPS. The Security Guard gives him a hard look, holding out a plastic tray.

SECURITY GUARD
Scissors; knives; nail clippers;
pepper spray; urban assault gear;
tomahawk missiles...

Josh pauses - say what? The Security Guard cracks a smile, waving him through -

SECURITY GUARD
Kiddin', man.

Going through, Josh catches sight of the security monitors and sees - or thinks he does - that same *STRANGE BLUR* coming through the library door right behind him.

He turns and looks. Nothing there. Long pause. Pushes through the turnstile.

INT. LIBRARY - CONTINUOUS

STUDENTS gossiping. Talking on cell phones. Sending text messages. Perhaps one or two are reading books. Josh comes past the circulation desk to the elevator.

INT. ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

Josh ascends. The floor indicator going from G to 4. DING. The doors open, revealing a much quieter, much darker upper floor filled with rows of books. The library stacks.

INT. LIBRARY STACKS - CONTINUOUS

As Josh comes down a narrow aisle, motion-sensitive fluorescent LIGHTS FLICKER ON in rows above him, illuminating his path. They switch off once he's gone, casting the books into shadow again.

INT. STUDY AREA / LIBRARY STACKS - NIGHT

Josh sits alone studying in a private cubicle. It's dark except for a little brass lamp mounted on the desk, the kind you see in law libraries.

And there's no specific reason why Josh chooses this moment to look up from his book and scan the stacks. It's just that sense you get of not being alone, of being watched.

And he's right.

Down the darkened aisle in front of him he sees something, something he doesn't fully understand but that terrifies him nonetheless -

The BLUR of a DARK FIGURE moving steadily toward him. And it's such an eerie, unsettling sight that Josh's voice cracks a little when he tries to speak.

JOSH
H-hell-lo...?

No answer, but SOMETHING is definitely coming down that aisle, something large, more of a pooling of shadow than a real person, and relentless in its approach.

In a panic, Josh grabs one of his books and tosses it into the aisle. The LIGHTS in that section FLICKER ON.

Nothing there. Nothing at all. Just long shelves of books. With the elevator and exit visible beyond.

Josh exhales deeply, decompressing a bit.

But when the LIGHTS FLICKER OFF a moment later Josh's EYES JERK WIDE OPEN in terror -

Because this THING is right in front of him - a HIDEOUS TRANSLUCENT FACE that seems almost MOLTEN, the features swimming in the oddest, creepiest way. And before Josh even comprehends what's happening a SPIDERY-FINGERED HAND flies up in a BLURRED STREAK at his face -

CUT TO BLACK.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

A shuttle bus diesels down a city street in the early hours of morning.

INT. SHUTTLE BUS - DAY

Among its passengers, a young coed sits listening to an iPod. No makeup, her short blonde hair pulled back into a couple of those stumpy Generation Y pigtaails - an effort to tone down a face she considers too "pretty". MATTIE. Smart, savvy, but with the normal vulnerability of a nineteen-year-old.

A thought intrudes. Keeping the music playing, she pops the earbud from her right ear and brings her cell phone up to it, speed-dialing someone. On the second ring, it's answered by the phonemail system:

RECORDED VOICE

At the beep, please leave your message for...

(JOSH'S OWN VOICE)

Josh Adleman.

BEEP.

Mattie, sad at his voice, decides against leaving a message. Flips the phone closed. And as she rides on, one ear listening to music, the other ear listening to nothing...

INT. LECTURE HALL - DAY

A large lecture hall. Descending rows of desks full of students. Among them we find Mattie taking notes. Beside her, a dark-haired, socially-oriented girlfriend (ISABELLE) checking email on her Blackberry, as the PSYCHOLOGY PROFESSOR drones on:

PSYCH PROFESSOR

- Everything we touch, taste, hear and see - not "truth", but a representation of it, corrupted by the mind's need to reduce into tangible fragments the avalanche of sensory input that comes its way every waking moment. Thus, Plato's Allegory of the Cave. That our perception of reality is as shallow and distorted as the shadows cast by fire on the wall of the cave that holds us all prisoner.

Mattie leans over to Isabelle, bringing her up to speed.

MATTIE

We're in a cave.

ISABELLE

(looks up from Blackberry)
Cave?

MATTIE

Cave.

ISABELLE

(eyes down; emailing
again)
I knew that.

And as the lecture continues...

EXT. LECTURE HALL - DAY

Mattie and Isabelle coming down the steps after class.

ISABELLE

Wanna know what the single most terrifying thought in the entire universe is? That man, Professor Cardiff, he breeds. He's a breeder. Foreplay. Insertion. The exchange of bodily fluids...

MATTIE

(repulsed; hand raised)
These are not images I want in my head.

ISABELLE

See? Good luck sleeping tonight.

Mattie smiles. STONE comes up to them. Tall, bohemian type with a patch of chin fuzz that he's braided just for the hell of it. Twenty-one. Easy smile. Enjoys life because his is unencumbered by any sense of moral judgement.

STONE

Hey girls. Gimme something.
Anything you got.

MATTIE

Your open zipper?

STONE

(nods, zipping pants)
That works.
(to Mattie; as they walk)
Oh, by the way, can I just tell you your boyfriend is a genius?
(holds up cell phone)
Every minute I use I get credited for two. I am reaching out to the world, baby.
(off Isabelle's icy look)
What?

ISABELLE

They broke up, moron.

Stone's face says oh shit.

STONE

Sorry.

MATTIE
(re: free minutes;
knowingly)
Josh hacked them?

STONE
Hacked is such an ugly word.

ISABELLE
(to Stone; as in "please
get lost")
And then he quietly made his exit.

STONE
See ya. Hey, don't tell him I told
you, huh?

Stone departs. Mattie and Isabelle walk on. Mattie's gone quiet at the mention of her ex, still struggling with it.

ISABELLE
You okay?

MATTIE
Yeah. I gotta go.

ISABELLE
Call me later?

Mattie nods yeah. And as they head off on different paths...

INT. MATTIE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Mattie enters. It's a small one-bedroom apartment.
Inexpensively, but tastefully decorated. Her refuge.

She stops at the coffee table to sort through her mail. Junk,
junk, junk - drops them one by one into the trash.

INT. MATTIE'S KITCHEN - DAY

Mattie comes into the kitchen and opens the fridge, scanning
for a snack. Nothing in there she wants.

The fridge swings shut and there's a PHOTO of JOSH on the
door - smiling, happier times. She can't help but look at
it. It's not a moment of teary-eyed contemplation. Just a
glance, just a recognition things have changed.

EXT. CAMPUS MALL - DAY

A sunny Autumn day. Guys playing frisbee on the mall. MUSIC playing from somebody's dorm room across the quad. Mattie and Isabelle sitting on the lawn in the afternoon sun.

ISABELLE

Sometimes a total disregard for
one's academic commitments is the
only responsible thing to do.

Mattie nods quietly in agreement, still a bit sad, watching campus life as a point of reference for her own.

ISABELLE

Look, if you don't want to get into
it, cool, but - what happened? You
and Josh, you were so good...?

MATTIE

I don't know. He didn't tell me,
he just ended it.

ISABELLE

(gently; sympathetic)
That sucks.

MATTIE

(nods yeah)
Twisted thing is he breaks up with
me and I'm worried about him, how
he's doing - how sick is that?

ISABELLE

I just pity him. For the crushing
regret that awaits when he realizes
what he had.

MATTIE

(touched)
Thanks.

ISABELLE

Meanwhile there's like fifty guys I
want to introduce you to.
Scorching hotties all.

MATTIE

Subtract the ones you've slept
with.

Isabelle does math on her fingers.

ISABELLE

Okay, so there's this great guy I
want you to meet.

They share a laugh. It's a nice moment. Sun. Music.
Mattie with a smile on her face.

ISABELLE

(re: happy Mattie)
Hey, she's back.

INT. CAMPUS COFFEEHOUSE - NIGHT

A moody little midnight haven for coffee diehards and
insomniacs. It's busy tonight, people lined up at the food
counter, a CD jukebox playing hip-hop.

Working behind the counter, making a sandwich, is an
undergrad in his early twenties. Good-looking guy.
Sideburns. Tattoo on his neck. DEXTER. He turns to the
counter holding the sandwich out to Mattie on a plate.

DEXTER

You had the grilled eggplant on
focaccia?

MATTIE

I had the regular coffee.

Oh. He grabs her coffee. She pays. He feeds the till.

Dexter is wearing a moss-green hand-knitted sweater that is
riddled with holes. He catches her looking at it as he hands
back the change.

DEXTER

There was a moth incident. Got
ugly.

She nods yeah, looks like. Drink in hand, she heads for a
corner table...

AT THE CORNER TABLE - LATER

Chapter outlines interspersed with cups of coffee. A study group: Mattie, Isabelle, Stone, and TIM, an intellectual type who grates on everyone's nerves.

MATTIE

(reading from book)

But how does one reconcile the soaring expansion of global technologies - those vast libraries of knowledge at the fingertips of modern man - with the deepening trends toward isolation, apathy, and ignorance?

ISABELLE

Okay, but what about like online dating? That totally brings people together.

Tim levels a flat stare across the table.

TIM

Does it hurt?

ISABELLE

What?

TIM

When they take you aboard the mothership and suck your brain out your ass?

Isabelle flips him off.

STONE

Anybody seen Josh? It'd be cool to get his chapters sometime before the test.

There's an exchange of glances - nobody has seen him. And a natural drifting of the gazes toward Mattie, who knows him best. She takes out her cell phone, speed-dialing him.

One RING. Second RING -

RECORDED VOICE

The voicemail box you have called is full and cannot accept any more incoming messages at this time. Please try again later.

Mattie finds this odd. Odd and a little worrying.

ISABELLE
(reading her look)
What...?

MATTIE
He's not getting his messages.

TIM
Maybe he went somewhere.

MATTIE
Week before midterms?

Tim shrugs. Mattie stands to go, collecting her stuff.

MATTIE
I'm gonna go check on him.

ISABELLE
Want me to come?

MATTIE
Nah, I'm good.

INT. SHUTTLE BUS - NIGHT

Mattie rides alone in a seat near the front. The bus is nearly empty. She stands, indicating her stop.

MATTIE
Here, this is it.

EXT. WORKING-CLASS NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - NIGHT

The shuttle bus grinds to a halt by a liquor store. Drunken laughter from some vagrants huddled outside. A boom-car thumps by, blaring HIP-HOP.

Mattie gets off the bus and crosses the street to a rundown apartment building.

EXT. JOSH'S BUILDING - NIGHT

It's a courtyard building. Mattie makes for a set of exterior stairs leading to a second floor walkway.

EXT. UPPER WALKWAY AND JOSH'S APARTMENT DOOR - NIGHT

She arrives at the door and rings the bell. We can hear it CHIME inside, but no one answers.

Mattie knocks.

MATTIE

Josh?

No answer. The blinds are pulled. A potted plant by the doorway is dead.

She lifts it and comes up with a KEY.

Unlocks the door.

MATTIE

Josh?

INT. JOSH'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Mattie enters. She's shocked by what she sees. The place is trashed. Everything says male loner on the brink. There's even a grimy piece of plastic sheeting hanging in the doorway leading to the kitchen, moving wraithlike in a draft. An open window over the sink provides the chill breeze, and the only illumination.

MATTIE

Josh? You here?

Mattie tries a couple of lights. None work. The power's obviously been turned off. She rubs her hands together and pulls her coat closer around herself. Heat must be off too.

She ventures into the kitchen.

INT. JOSH'S KITCHEN / A ROOF - CONTINUOUS

No Josh. There's a water bowl and a cat food can on the floor near the fridge, both empty. Mattie looks up at a movement.

THE KITCHEN WINDOW - looks out onto a flat roof a few feet below. There's a skinny WHITE AND ORANGE CAT out there, looking straight back at her. It MEOWS warily.

Mattie is dismayed at its condition.

MATTIE

When's the last time you ate?

She makes that little clucking sound humans make when they try to get a cat to come. The animal's having none of this. Too scared.

MATTIE

I'll get you something.

She turns and opens the fridge. Reels at the stench and black moldy containers. Slams it shut.

OUT THE WINDOW - the cat splits.

Mattie, unnerved, reenters the living room.

INT. JOSH'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Mattie looks down into a hallway. Very dark there. But she goes in anyway, heading for the first doorway.

INT. JOSH'S WORK ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Mattie enters. The first bedroom has been converted into a computer-dominated work room. There's a folding table holding a tangle of cables, a desktop computer and a pile of floppies and iomega zip disks, all jumbled together.

ON THE COMPUTER'S MONITOR - the SCREENSAVER: a photograph of JOSH and FRIENDS - Mattie, Isabelle, Stone, etc. They're all mugging for the camera.

Mattie jiggles the mouse. The SCREENSAVER disappears and a screen full of COMPLEX CODING, line after line of it, is revealed. Greek to Mattie.

She looks around. A wall nearby is pasted with more Polaroids and snapshots of Josh and friends.

INSERT ON SOME - Spring Break somewhere with the gang. Josh and Mattie arm in arm. A picture of Josh with his cat. Except here the animal is fat and happy.

Mattie stares at the photos a moment, remembering.

There's an empty closet stuffed with computer cartons and dirty clothes. And a second closed door. Mattie goes over to this, what must be the doorway to the bathroom. It's locked.

INT. JOSH'S HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Mattie reenters the hall and peers down to Josh's bedroom door. There's something odd about it. Something red.

IN THE GLOOM, Mattie creeps to it.

Stops, puzzled.

THE BEDROOM DOOR. Red tape is plastered around the entire door, covering all the cracks between the door and frame. There's even tape covering the crack under the door, and a red X of the stuff over the keyhole as well.

What in the world?

Behind Mattie, SOMEONE or SOMETHING appears behind the plastic sheeting in the kitchen doorway. From OUR VIEW it's just a DARK SHAPE. It seems to be looking out the kitchen window, but it's hard to tell.

Mattie turns toward the workroom and immediately sees the SHADOWY FIGURE just beyond.

It looks at her.

She draws in her breath, scared shitless.

A moment later it moves, and a young, gaunt JOSH steps into view. Expressionless. It takes Mattie two or three seconds to even recognize him.

MATTIE
(stunned)
Josh?

He looks at her a moment, then just says in a flat voice -

JOSH
Hey.

He disappears into the work room. Mattie rushes down the hall, nearly colliding with him as he re-emerges with a roll of coaxial cable.

MATTIE
What's going on?

He stops and looks at her, a faint, sad smile haunting his lips.

MATTIE
You okay?

He nods yeah and then casts an eerie glance at the bedroom door down the hall.

JOSH
Wait here for a sec. All right?

Mattie, frozen by that look, nods okay. He holds up a grimy finger in the "wait right here" sign. Turns and walks into the kitchen.

Mattie does wait a bit, trying not to push him, trying to keep her voice casual, calm.

MATTIE
So, wild guess - you didn't outline
your chapters...?

Some sort of SCRAPING SOUND out in the kitchen, but it's hard to tell what it is. Certainly there's no answer.

MATTIE
I can help if you want...?

Still no answer. Thinking he couldn't hear her, she walks into the kitchen doorway.

MATTIE
Josh...?

From the kitchen itself there's a sudden CLATTER of wood against linoleum, a brittle CRACK! Mattie cries out. Her hands fly to her face and she bumps back against the wall.

INT. JOSH'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

CUT TO WHAT SHE SEES: JOSH - strung from an overhead pipe, cable noosed around his neck. His feet kicking above an upended chair, skin purpling as vertebrae separate with a soft POP.

Mattie flies to him in stark terror, grabbing his legs, lifting him with sheer adrenaline.

She looks around in desperation - tries to reach the noose - can't get her fingers under it - then tries to get the chair, reaching out with one foot for it. She loses her balance with this impossible try, and despite all her effort fails. She lets go of the body so she won't pull it down, but with only flesh and sinew holding head to body, the boy's neck elongates hideously.

Mattie lurches over to the counter - flails through the drawers until she finds a knife - races back and grabs his legs again - lifting with one arm, sawing at the cable with her other - dull blade, metal cable - it's not working - and she's crying and screaming at him to fucking hang on.

All the while trying to avoid his dead and staring eyes...

EXT. CAMPUS QUAD / KIOSK - DAY

People darting for cover in a downpour. One of them, walking not running, ducks under the edge of one of those hexagonal kiosks plastered with notices and campus news.

It's Dexter.

He fishes out a cigarette, lights it up. Smoking, he glances absently at the various notices: TUTOR WANTED, GET \$\$\$ TO LOSE WEIGHT, SUICIDE PREVENTION HOTLINE, MOVING SALE, etc.

His gaze settles on one particular notice. He pulls the sheet off - we don't see what it says - and quietly reads it as he stands there smoking in the rain.

INT. SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST'S OFFICE - DAY

Mattie sits in mute detachment opposite the school psychologist. He's forty; balding; perfectly competent but nobody she would ever open up to. DR WATERSON.

DR WATERSON

It's difficult for us to talk about loss. Particularly under these circumstances. So many conflicting emotions involved.

(off her silence)

Pat as this may sound... it's okay to cry.

MATTIE

I know. Go ahead.

She stands up, putting on her coat.

DR WATERSON

Five minutes, that's all I get?

MATTIE

I'm wasting your time.

DR WATERSON

No, you're not.

MATTIE

You're wasting mine.

He gives a clinical nod.

DR WATERSON

You're angry. That's normal.

MATTIE

No, actually, I'm late for class.

She crosses to the door.

DR WATERSON

You loved him, didn't you? You think it's possible you caused this.

The question finds a chink in her armor. Mattie pauses in the doorway, provoked.

MATTIE
Are you listening?

DR WATERSON
I'm listening.

MATTIE
The only person I blame is Josh.

DR WATERSON
Sure about that?

She nods yes, but her face tells a different story. She looks away, fighting tears.

MATTIE
(berating herself)
Fuck...

The emotions keep coming, pouring out despite her efforts. Dr Waterson moves in to assist.

MATTIE
(sobbing now; almost a
scream)
Fuck!!

Dr Waterson takes hold of her under the elbow, keeping her upright as the emotional collapse gives way to a physical one. And as he guides her to the nearest chair...

INT. GROUND FLOOR APARTMENT OFF A COURTYARD - DAY

Dexter rings the bell at a first floor apartment with a sign that says LANDLORD. An old Cambodian woman cracks the door, peering past the chain.

LANDLADY
What?

DEXTER
You had an ad at the college for a
used computer?

Holds up the notice from the campus kiosk. She looks him up and down, then unchains the door. A PIT BULL eases off the couch behind her. Dexter eyes it.

LANDLADY
He only hurt bad people.

INT. LANDLADY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Dexter enters. The dog moves stiff-legged towards him until the old woman kicks backwards expertly.

LANDLADY
Couch.

The dog flings itself back onto the couch, coiling like a clenched fist.

On the floor nearby are a flatscreen LCD monitor, computer, keyboard, and the usual tangle of cords. An expensive system loaded with peripherals.

DEXTER
It work?

LANDLADY
'Course it work. Why I sell
computer that not work?

DEXTER
Because it doesn't work.

LANDLADY
What?

DEXTER
Nothing. Broadband compatible?

Uncomprehending stare.

DEXTER
Nevermind. How much?

LANDLADY
Five hundred. Cash. No receipt.
Good deal.

DEXTER
Great deal. It's worth three times
that.

And the implications of this aren't lost on her.

LANDLADY

Bad tenant. I take back for rent.
(impatient)
Five hundred. You want or not?

Dexter counts the money in his wallet.

DEXTER

Only have four.

LANDLADY

(greedy; seeing the money)
I take check. Four hundred cash.
One hundred check. Today only.

And with a criminal smile Dexter starts peeling twenties out of his wallet.

EXT. STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Dexter loads the stuff into an old Rambler. The old woman stands at the top of the walk, holding the check he wrote, watching as he drives off.

CAMERA PANS THE CAR AWAY, REVEALING - the building they've come from in the WIDE SHOT for the first time.

It's JOSH'S BUILDING.

INT. MATTIE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Mattie sitting despondently on her sofa, eyes red from crying.

She comes over and sits down at her computer, checking her email - out of force of habit more than genuine interest.

(13) new items, a number that strikes her as unusually high. She scrolls down the list.

And her face goes white. Because the last eight items look like this:

[illegible]

Mattie clicks on the first one. Empty message.

Clicks on the second. Empty message.

Opens the rest in rapid succession - CLICK, CLICK, CLICK, CLICK, CLICK, CLICK.

Empty. Empty. Empty. Empty. Empty. Empty.

Mattie stares at them, haunted.

Her phone RINGS. She picks up.

ISABELLE (V.O.)
(filtered)
Mattie, this is really creepy, I
just got -

MATTIE
(into phone)
Me, too.

And as she stares at the messages from her dead boyfriend...

EXT. COLLEGE CAMPUS - DAY

The campus seen from high above, the vantage point of a tall building or perhaps a tower. Lecture halls, trees, lawns - some vague geometry to it all.

EXT. STUDENT UNION / FOUNTAIN - DAY

A fountain outside the student union. Isabelle, Stone and Tim hanging out between classes. Mattie comes up.

TIM
We all got them.

MATTIE
Who sent them?

ISABELLE
Somebody with a really fucked up
sense of humor.

TIM
It's probably just a virus. His
computer must still be logged in,
it's just hitting his email list.

Stone nods his agreement.

MATTIE
But they said help me.

STONE
Viruses always put something
important-sounding in the subject
line. The other day I got one that
said: URGENT STONE READ ME NOW.
Saw my name, I almost fell for it.

ISABELLE
That was from me.

STONE
Okay. My bad.

MATTIE
Can somebody go log him off? I
can't go back there.

Hesitant looks all around, nobody is dying to do this.
Finally Stone takes to his feet.

STONE
How do I get in?

EXT. JOSH'S BUILDING - LATE AFTERNOON

Stone pulls up on a Suzuki motorcycle that's seen better
days. Climbs off and eyes the building from the street for a
moment, in no great hurry to go in there.

EXT. JOSH'S UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Topping the stairs, Stone comes along the hallway to Josh's apartment and - looking around to make sure no one is watching - picks up the dead potted plant by the door.

NO KEY.

Shit. Now what?

And then Stone's gaze drifts up to the roof.

EXT. ROOF OF JOSH'S BUILDING - DAY

Satellite dishes, tv antennas, an access door - swinging open as Stone emerges, crossing a roof littered with technology. He stops at the edge. Stares down at the balcony to Josh's apartment. Quite a fall if he misses.

Bracing himself, he jumps down.

INT. JOSH'S APARTMENT - DAY

Stone pries open a window and squirms inside. Finds his feet and checks the place out.

It appears no one has entered since we last saw it. Scattered on the floor are rolls of red tape. Some still in the multi-pack they came in. Some opened and used. A few empty cores. Weird.

Stone looks down the dark hallway toward the work room. He comes down it. Disappears into Josh's office.

INT. JOSH'S OFFICE - DAY

Stone sees the table is absent the computer. Looks behind some boxes. Looks over at the closet. No computer.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Stone exits the office and heads into the living room.

INT. JOSH'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Stone slows, looking toward the kitchen. Through that darkened doorway is where Josh hanged himself. Curiosity gets the best of him.

INT. JOSH'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Stone walks in and stops, reacting to something OFF-SCREEN right. He flicks on the CEILING LIGHT.

IN HIS POV - Right where Josh was hanging when he died, there is a dark SMUDGE on the wall. It vaguely suggests a human shape. Or perhaps that's just a trick of the eye. Whatever it is, it wasn't there before.

Stone stares at it. He can't make himself come any farther into the kitchen. In fact he quickly flicks the LIGHT BACK OFF and exits.

CAMERA PANS TO WATCH HIM as he retreats into the first room. Then he stops, as if sensing something. He comes back to where he stood in the kitchen doorway and turns toward the O.S. smudge. And his face goes white. His hand never makes it to the light switch.

PAN TO WHAT HE SEES IN THE DARK SHADOW - JOSH standing where the smudge was. Not moving, almost a shadow himself, but definitely there.

ON STONE - face torn between disbelief, terror and a terrible sadness.

STONE
(hoarse whisper)
Josh, man, is that you?

The figure's mouth begins to gape open, more and more, until it's nothing more than a huge, oval hole. It's a terrifying sight, and it freezes Stone in his tracks.

Next moment there's a SCRATCHING sound on the window behind him. Stone turns to see the skeletal cat clawing at the glass outside, meowing silently to come in.

Stone snaps his eyes back to the figure. Only it's not there anymore. Only the dark blotch again, where Josh seemed to be standing only a moment before.

STONE

Josh?

There's a MUFFLED KNOCK from the other side of the apartment. Stone spins, and moves toward the source with measured steps. Another MUFFLED KNOCK. Closer to him this time as he comes back down the hall. And sees where its coming from.

THE BEDROOM DOOR - sealed with red tape. Hesitates a moment. Swears under his breath. Comes closer.

STONE

Josh?

AT THE DOOR - he looks at it with a mixture of skepticism, curiosity and deep uneasiness. Then he starts ripping off the tape.

Riiiiip! Riiiiiiiip! Riiiiiiiiiiiiiiip! Up one side, over the top, down the other. Finally the bottom strip. Then he opens the door.

INT. JOSH'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Stone ventures in. It's even darker in here. The door wasn't the only thing sealed. Both windows have been taped shut with an obsessiveness so thorough only a scant amount of light is allowed in at all, and this darkly red.

The room looks like it was abandoned in haste, the bed unmade, clothes strewn. Stone draws a deep breath and goes into the adjoining bathroom.

INT. JOSH'S BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Same deal here. Window sealed with red tape. Also the door leading from here into the work room. Every crack and cranny taped over.

Stone starts to leave, then looks at the enclosed bathtub. It has a shower curtain of dirty translucent plastic, which is pulled closed. And there's SOMETHING DARK in there. It looks like it might have long hair. Stone stares at it a long moment, then gathering his remaining courage, grabs the edge of the curtain and snatches it open.

An old-fashioned stringy mop, left in the tub with its mop end up to dry, falls out at him.

For one instant in the darkness it almost looks human - and Stone leaps back with a little cry. Then, seeing what it is, kicks it angrily. Then he has to laugh at himself.

STONE
(shakily)
Fuckin' A...

He picks it up and leans it up against the taped door. That's when, with his back to the bedroom, he hears the bedroom's door to the hallway CLICK SHUT.

He freezes for a moment, then turns, listening. Steps back into the bedroom.

INT. JOSH'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

It's even darker now that the door's closed. And something is stirring in the shadows, over by the door to the hallway. Next moment a DARK FIGURE steps forward.

It definitely appears female, definitely human. But it's not real in the sense that any one of us would be comfortable with.

It BLURS when it moves.

You can occasionally see through it.

The FACE is translucent, shifting, skewed, as though not fully anchored in bone.

STONE - starts backing up, eyes bugged, mouth opening and shutting, unable to form words. He looks around for a way out. The thing, whatever it is, is between him and the doors.

THE FIGURE closes in, moving erratically, as if homing by means of a badly corrupted perception.

STONE - reels to the windows, in full animal panic now, trying to drag one open. The tape holds. He claws through it frantically with his fingers, only to see -

THICK SECURITY BARS bolted onto the frame outside. Trapped, Stone runs for the only cover offered him -

THE BED against the wall. He dives over it blindly and falls down between its far side and the wall.

TIGHT ON STONE - eyes blind with terror - wedged in tightly in a helpless position, unable to move his arms, head flat on the floor.

He wrenches his head around and looks under the bed in desperation to see if the legs are coming his way. Fortunately, for whatever reason, the view is clear. No shadowy legs or feet or hem.

STONE'S EYES - registering desperate hope. Insane relief.

Stone twists his head back to look up, his only way out.

IN HIS POV - Staring straight back at him is the female shape's face - hollow eyes boring into his soul - tendrils of long hair spilling down into his eyes. And its long, spider-white hand reaches down and falls over Stone's pinned and SCREAMING face like a big white spider on a trapped fly.

INT. MATTIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Middle of the night, Mattie lies sleeping in bed.

On her desk, her computer is dormant on hibernate.

Suddenly we hear the hard-drive engage - CLICK-WHIRRRRRRR. It spins for ten seconds, a PINPOINT of LIGHT pulsing center-screen as it loads something malicious.

And then it stops. Returns to hibernate.

Mattie is still asleep. She has no idea what just happened.

INT. CAFETERIA - DAY

STUDENTS eating in a crowded cafeteria. At a table by themselves, Mattie and Isabelle.

MATTIE

It's weird, I keep seeing people on campus and thinking it's him.

ISABELLE

Josh?

Mattie nods yeah.

ISABELLE

That's not weird. Takes a while
for someone you love to disappear.

Mattie nods. A deep sadness beneath the quiet. It's a loss
that can't be reconciled. Then:

MATTIE

You still getting the emails?

ISABELLE

Yeah, I've just been deleting.

MATTIE

What, Stone never went...?

ISABELLE

(shrugs)

He's been blowing off class all
week. He was probably on his way
over there and he went right
instead of left and ended up in
Cabo San Lucas.

Isabelle smiles. Mattie doesn't, having a dark thought.

EXT. CAFETERIA - DAY

Mattie and Isabelle coming down the sidewalk outside.

MATTIE

When's the last time you talked to
him?

ISABELLE

(off her worried look)

Come on, when Stone actually does
what he says, that's when you
worry.

Mattie nods, true enough. But slows, her gut telling her
something.

MATTIE

I'm gonna go by his place. Come
with me?

ISABELLE
(resisting)
Mattie -

MATTIE
Please?

ISABELLE
- I have like a million things to
do. You should see the pile of
laundry in my room - it's
disgusting, it's like living with a
guy.

Mattie asks again with a look - please? And as Isabelle
sighs, giving in...

EXT. STONE'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

A high-rise in a once-affluent area that now leans toward
poverty and decay.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE STONE'S APARTMENT - DAY

A dark corridor. Mattie knocking on Stone's door. Isabelle
waiting impatiently, checking email on her Blackberry.
Mattie stops knocking. There's nobody home.

MATTIE
What should we do?

ISABELLE
Um, leave?

MATTIE
Maybe there's a building manager -

But suddenly the door OPENS, SNAPPING TAUT against the chain.
It gives them both a jolt. Peering through the crack is
Stone, ghostly pale, unshaven, eyes red-rimmed.

ISABELLE
Jesus, what - are you sick?

Stone says nothing, oddly mute.

MATTIE
Where've you been? Did you go to
Josh's?

A barely perceptible nod.

MATTIE
And?

STONE
(low; hoarse)
Wasn't there.

MATTIE
His computer?

Stone nods. Eyes on the floor.

STONE
You guys need to go.

ISABELLE
Why?

He looks at them, with a sense of impending doom -

STONE
I'm expecting someone.

And then he closes the door. We hear it lock. Mattie and
Isabelle exchange a look - what the hell?

EXT. JOSH'S BUILDING - DAY

Mattie stands in the courtyard staring up at Josh's
apartment. There is a FOR RENT sign on the door.

EXT. JOSH'S UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - DAY

Mattie tops the stairs and comes slowly down to Josh's door.
A row of garbage bags outside it. She goes to the window,
peering inside past the drawn blinds. It's pitch black.

But eerily - right under her nose - she sees the WINDOW LOCK
SLOWLY TURNING. The window itself now LIFTING OPEN, raised
from the inside. Terrified, she heads for the steps.

But the DOOR SWINGS OPEN in front of her, blocking her path.
And the OLD CAMBODIAN LANDLADY steps from the apartment,
garbage bag in hand.

LANDLADY

Have look. I paint and put in new
carpet.

She props open the door with a fan. And the open door gives
Mattie an angle on the interior. Gutted. The carpets torn
up. A painter working inside.

LANDLADY

Cheap rent. How much you want to
pay?

MATTIE

My boyfriend used to live here.

The landlady's face says ooooh.

MATTIE

His computer is missing.

LANDLADY

Computer?

MATTIE

(knows instantly)
You're lying.

Mattie dials her cell phone.

MATTIE

(into phone)
Hi, I'd like to report a theft.

LANDLADY

(pleading; confessing)
No call police, no call police.

Mattie hangs up, and levels a withering stare at the old
woman.

LANDLADY

Two months, I tell him, 'hey, you
owe rent.' He no pay.

MATTIE

You sold it?

LANDLADY
He no pay, two months -

MATTIE
Who did you sell it to?

EXT. LANDLADY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Mattie waits outside. The landlady opens the door, holding out the check.

LANDLADY
(bitter)
Tell him he still owe hundred
dollar. Bank not take it.

Mattie snatches the check from her hand. The name and address on it: DEXTER MCCARTHY. 217 WEYMOUTH DR.

EXT. DEXTER'S APARTMENT / RAMBLER - DAY

Dexter, in the front yard, hosing down his beat-up Rambler. Shirt unbuttoned, cigarette in his mouth, tattoo emblazoned on his neck and shoulder.

MATTIE (O.S.)
It bounced.

He turns and there's Mattie holding out the check.

MATTIE
But I guess it doesn't matter since
you bought a stolen computer.

Dexter takes a drag on his cigarette and resumes hosing.

DEXTER
She seemed so honest.

MATTIE
Where do I know you from...?

DEXTER
Coffeehouse?

MATTIE

(nods)

Right. So, why are you emailing me?

DEXTER

Emailing you?

Mattie mimes keystrokes to illustrate the concept, the tapping of a button -

MATTIE

Send?

DEXTER

Um, I don't even know who you are.

MATTIE

(getting annoyed)

It's my boyfriend's. You found his password and now you're using his account.

Dexter stares at her with the blank expression of someone who is totally busted - or hasn't an idea in hell what she's talking about.

He drops the hose and circles to the back of the Rambler and pops the latch. The trunk opens to reveal -

JOSH'S COMPUTER. Tangled in cords. Untouched since we last saw it.

DEXTER

Thought maybe I'd hook it up this weekend.

Mattie beside him, dumbfounded.

DEXTER

Listen, stolen or not, thing cost me four hundred bucks. Tell your boyfriend I'll fight him for it, how's that?

MATTIE

(turning to go)

Keep it.

DEXTER
Maybe we can fight for you instead.

Mattie pauses, gives him a lethal look.

MATTIE
He died, asshole.

Dexter's face falls. Before he can apologize Mattie is halfway down the sidewalk.

DEXTER
Classic.

INT. DEXTER'S APARTMENT - DAY

Minimal in size. Thrift-shop furnishings. Threadbare carpets. A torn lampshade. It's the apartment of a financial aid student.

On the desk is an OLD PERSONAL COMPUTER that's been upgraded and expanded with secondhand odds and ends. It's a testament to the resourcefulness of its owner. Even so, it's a bit sad. It has one of those big clunky antiquated CD-ROM drives and a keyboard with cigarette burns and an old mouse that's been repaired and taped back together a few times.

Dexter slides the whole thing off the desk into a trash can and puts Josh's new computer down in its place.

CLOSE SERIES OF SHOTS:

- 1) A KEYBOARD SERIAL PLUG fitting into the back of the COMPUTER.
- 2) A POWER CORD going into a wall socket with a faint blue spark.
- 3) A FINGER pushing an "ON" BUTTON. A GREEN LED indicator lights up, a hard disk starts to WHIR.
- 4) A NETWORK HARDWARE gets plugged into a cable modem.
- 5) A COMPUTER MONITOR BLINKS ON. We start to see the booting-up PROTOCOL SCREENS flash by.

Dexter sits watching the new computer booting up - the Norton Anti-virus flags, sub-menus and DOS hand-offs zipping by on its screen.

THE SCREEN - lights up with the Windows Desktop. There are dozens of utilities and programs represented by icons. This computer is not just fast, it's loaded. And almost immediately a WINDOW pops up in the middle.

"A Local Area Network (LAN) has been detected. Would you like to connect to the HINKLEY COLLEGE LAN? YES. NO."

He clicks YES.

The school's homepage appears. Dexter clicks on the "Internet Access" box and a SCREEN comes up that says - "This HTML is currently not available. Would you like to (a) Return to previous screen (b) Quit."

Dexter checks the hardwire is properly plugged in. It's solid. Not sure what the problem is he doubleclicks on the (a) option - "Return to previous screen."

THE SCREEN - doesn't take him back where he was before, however.

It comes up with a GRAINY IMAGE OF A DARKENED ROOM. A YOUNG WOMAN, quite possibly a student at the college, sits facing the screen as if looking into one of those monitor-top computer cameras. Her hair falls partially over her face. Her eyes are vacant, lost. She moves slightly, her eyes flicking up intently, as if literally she has sensed Dexter looking at her.

An expression of desperation and even of warning creeps over her face. She moves closer, like a lost soul outside one's window in the middle of the night. Peering in. Wanting in.

BACK ON DEXTER - as he leans back a little, off-balance. He clicks the keyboard. The woman disappears. Abruptly we're looking into -

ANOTHER DARK ROOM. Grainy, shadowed. A MAN IN A RED SHIRT sits foreground. At least it seems to be a man, judging from the body's build. We can't tell for sure because there's a black plastic garbage bag over the head.

It's the weirdest fucking image you could imagine - like Dexter has stumbled onto some sort of awful S&M site, or tapped into a satellite phone transmission of a hostage in the bowels of a dank Afghan tunnel.

Then the man's pale hand floats up. Reaches the top of the bag and takes hold.

This motion STROBES SLIGHTLY, AFTER IMAGES lagging behind the movement. And in SLOW MOTION the man begins pulling the bag off his head.

The shape of the head is suggested and distorted by turns, but we get the feeling we're going to see something god-awful the moment the bag comes off. Its bottom edges are already tugging at the guy's chin - the whole blurry bag is about to pull free -

Dexter quickly hits RETURN.

The MONITOR GOES BLACK for a moment, like a power surge just hit. Then, in the middle of the screen, a small pop-up window appears with the question:

WOULD YOU LIKE TO MEET A GHOST? YES. NO.

Dexter abruptly punches off the monitor's power. Then he turns off the computer too.

He sits back and stares at it - what the hell was that?

INT. CAMPUS POST OFFICE - DAY

Mattie and Isabelle walking along a wall of student P.O. boxes.

ISABELLE
You should report him.

MATTIE
He didn't send them.

ISABELLE
Fuck it, report him anyway, get the computer back.

MATTIE
I don't want it back.

Isabelle sees her point. They stop at Isabelle's P.O. box. She opens it. Frowns at the pile of junkmail she's gotten -

ISABELLE
Living at the poverty level - that qualifies me for like every major credit card?

MATTIE

One sec.

Mattie continues to her P.O. box - around the corner from Isabelle's. She opens it, peers in. Empty. But wait - she looks deeper - what's that? There's something tucked way in the back.

She reaches her arm in and pulls out a bulky padded manila envelope. Her name handwritten on the front. No return address. She stares at it, haunted, as Isabelle arrives.

ISABELLE

What's that?

MATTIE

From Josh. That's his writing.

Isabelle, shocked, gives her a look.

ISABELLE

When was it mailed?

MATTIE

(checking postmark)
Seventeenth. Two days before he died.

Grim pause. Mattie tears open the envelope and dumps the contents into her hand.

A THREE-PACK of HEAVY-DUTY RED TAPE.

Industrial-strength. The same tape we saw sealing Josh's bedroom door. But there's something else in the envelope. Mattie reaches in and takes it out -

A HANDWRITTEN NOTE

We don't see what it says yet, just the confused look on Mattie's face as she reads it.

ISABELLE

What's it say?

Mattie hands it to her. Isabelle reads. Backlit by a slant of sunlight, a few of the words can be seen (in reverse) through the page. They appear to have been scrawled in desperation.

ISABELLE

Oh my God...

INT. CAMPUS COFFEEHOUSE - NIGHT

The three-pack of red tape sits mid-table. The note beside it. For the first time we see what it says:

IT KEEPS THEM OUT. DON'T KNOW WHY. J.

Sitting around the table are Mattie, Isabelle, and Tim - what's left of the study group. They aren't studying. They're sitting in silence. Finally Tim asks the question that's on everybody's mind.

TIM

Keeps who out?

Clueless looks from all.

MATTIE

What the fuck is going on?

(re: red tape)

This stuff was all over his bedroom door. It was totally covered. I swear to God he looked at it like there was something in there with him.

ISABELLE

Maybe he just...

(gently, for Mattie)

...went crazy.

MATTIE

Stone, too?

TIM

Why - what's up with Stone?

MATTIE

He won't leave his apartment.

(to Isabelle)

You saw him, Iz, don't even try to tell me that was normal.

TIM

Probably scored himself some pharmaceuticals.

ISABELLE

He uses?

TIM

You think he's called Stone for his
steely determination?

In the b.g., we can see DEXTER working behind the counter.
Mattie trades glances with him, looks away. Her gaze returns
to the note, the red tape. Then, looking her friends dead in
the face -

MATTIE

Josh wasn't crazy. He was scared.
Whatever it was, whatever he was
hiding from - when Stone went in
there he saw it, too.

It's a chilling statement. Nobody knows what to say next.
Their gazes drifting from one another to the ominous note on
the table.

And it's Tim that reaches out first, slitting the cello-pack
with his keys and taking a roll of red tape.

A pause and then Mattie takes the second roll.

Isabelle hesitates, maintaining a degree of skepticism. But
you can see a trace of fear lingering just beneath the
surface.

And as she reaches for the third roll...

EXT. CAMPUS COFFEEHOUSE - NIGHT

Guys talking/smoking outside the door. Mattie and Isabelle
push through, hugging goodbye.

MATTIE

I'm gonna go by Stone's tomorrow,
see if I can get him to talk to Dr
Waterson...

ISABELLE

(re: the unspoken invite)
Can't, I have my ChemBio midterm.
What about Thursday?

MATTIE
(shakes her head)
We have to get him out of there.

Mattie heads off. Dexter exits the coffeehouse and comes after her.

DEXTER
Wait up.

She hears him, but keeps walking.

DEXTER
Jesus, will you stop?

She stops. He gets there.

DEXTER
I hooked that computer up.

MATTIE
All by yourself?

DEXTER
Yeah, just me. I need to show you something.

MATTIE
And it's conveniently located in your apartment.

DEXTER
Don't flatter yourself, hon.

MATTIE
Fuck off.

She walks away.

DEXTER
How well did you know your boyfriend? 'Cause I'm telling ya, he was into some scary-ass shit.

It takes a moment for this to register and another moment for Mattie to put on the brakes. She turns to look at Dexter, a bit wary of him, not sure he can be trusted.

INT. DEXTER'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Dexter sitting in front of Josh's computer. Mattie standing in the b.g., watching the monitor. The school's homepage comes up.

MATTIE
(impatient)
Waiting...

DEXTER
Give it a minute.

In the interval:

DEXTER
So it was an accident - how he died?
(off her look)
Sorry, forget it...

MATTIE
It wasn't an accident.

The graveness of Mattie's expression tells the rest of the story.

MATTIE
If you knew him you'd know that doesn't make any sense.

Dexter asks nothing more.

A DARKENED ROOM appears on the screen - we don't see the details yet, just their reactions as they turn to look.

DEXTER
(as in "here we go")
Okay...

Mattie steps closer, watching over Dexter's shoulder, haunted by the images before her.

DEXTER
First I thought it was just looping the same clips over and over, but it's live action sometimes - they don't always do the same thing...
(MORE)

DEXTER(cont'd)
it's like some kind of webcam
feed...

ON THE SCREEN - A keyboard is foreground, as if we're looking out of the room's monitor. Background in the shadows a THIN GUY of perhaps 30, sitting rigidly in a black office chair, rolls by in SLOW, BLURRED MOTION, left to right, as if on some sort of trolley to hell. His hands are up over his face, in shame or abject horror.

MATTIE
(re: computer; stunned)
This was on here?

DEXTER
(nods)
All I did was plug it in.

Mattie pulls up a chair and sits down beside Dexter, staring at the monitor.

And now that QUESTION appears in a small pop-up window on the screen:

WOULD YOU LIKE TO MEET A GHOST? YES. NO.

Mattie looks at Dexter - what the hell is this? He shrugs, somewhat gravely -

DEXTER
I have no idea.

Mattie eyes the question. Contemplating. Yes. No. She takes the mouse and brings the cursor to YES.

DEXTER
What are you doing?

MATTIE
Saying yes.

DEXTER
Why?

MATTIE
Josh would have.

Clicks YES.

The pop-up window disappears and there is no clear indication of the consequences of this action yet. Just MORE ROOMS coming up on the screen, more tormented souls.

The GUY IN THE RED SHIRT appears.

DEXTER

This guy was on here last night.
(re: bag on his head)
Watch - every time he goes to take
it off the image cuts out and goes
back to the beginning...

Mattie, aghast, transfixed -

MATTIE

How long did you watch them for?

DEXTER

I think the real question is who's
watching who.

Mattie takes a closer look. And the figures do appear to be peering out from the monitor. Aware they're being watched. Almost pleading for help with their eyes.

It scares the shit out of Mattie. She gets up, backing away.

MATTIE

Turn it off.

THOSE EYES follow her.

MATTIE

Fucking turn it off!

Dexter switches off the monitor. Then the computer. Mattie is so frightened it almost looks like anger.

MATTIE

What the hell is that?!

Dexter doesn't know what to tell her.

EXT. STREET NEAR STONE'S BUILDING - DAY

Mattie steps off a bus, coming down the sidewalk outside Stone's high-rise, cell phone to her ear -

STONE (V.O.)
(answering machine)
Talk to the machine.

BEEP.

MATTIE
(into phone)
Stone, I know you're there, pick
up...

At the top of FRAME, high above Mattie, we catch sight of someone climbing over the railing that runs along the top edge of Stone's building.

MATTIE
(into phone)
Pick up, it's Mattie, I need to
talk to you...

Even from this distance you can see it's Stone up there. He pauses briefly on the edge, buffeted by the wind, holding on by one hand. Then simply steps off.

Plummeting the distance in one continuous camera shot that captures the sickening build of momentum, he IMPACTS THE CAR parked on the street behind Mattie, collapsing the roof, exploding the windows with a tremendous CONCUSSIVE BLAST.

A dozen CAR ALARMS GO OFF from the impact. Mixing with the horrified SCREAMS of PASSERSBY.

Mattie spins, white and trembling as she approaches the wrecked car. A GIRL nearby is SOBBING hysterically. People are running out of the building.

And now Mattie sees STONE'S TWISTED BODY amid the wreckage. She just stands there as if she'd been struck between the eyes with a sledgehammer.

And we hear Stone's answering machine BEEP off on the cell phone in her hand.

EXT. STONE'S HIGH-RISE - LATER

Sirens and flashing lights. Medical examiners and emergency personnel on the scene. Police tape being putting up. In the street, there is a cop directing traffic. Another cop on the sidewalk waving for onlookers to keep moving.

Across the street, among the usual gathering of spectators, we find Mattie, an emotional wreck, being consoled by Isabelle whose face is streaked with tears.

MATTIE

Why is this... happening to me...?

Beside them, Tim watches in mute horror as STONE'S BODY, draped in a white sheet, is loaded into the back of a coroner's wagon.

TIM

It's happening to all of us.

INT. DEXTER'S APARTMENT - DAY

HIP-HOP playing. Dexter, cigarette in his mouth, is taping a large box shut in the middle of his living room. He's using ordinary packing tape and working at a normal casual pace.

There's a KNOCK on his door. He turns down the music and answers.

Standing on his doorstep are Mattie, Isabelle and Tim.

INT. DEXTER'S APARTMENT - LATER

Mattie, Isabelle, Tim and Dexter sitting grave-faced in his living room. The school newspaper lies on the coffeetable between them. A small headline: STUDENT DIES IN FALL. Picture of Stone beneath it.

What Mattie says next raises some eyebrows -

MATTIE

Something killed them.

Off Isabelle's look of "are you insane?" -

MATTIE

They're fucking dead, Izzie.

ISABELLE

They did it themselves.

MATTIE

Bullshit! Since when were they suicidal?!

(MORE)

MATTIE(cont'd)

Something made them do it. You
wanna deny it to me - fine - but
don't fucking lie to yourself!

It silences Isabelle and everyone else in the room.

TIM

Those freaks online, if they're the
ones Josh was trying to keep out,
how'd they get in in the first
place?

Dexter's gaze drifts to the box he was taping shut. The top
has been opened and we see Josh's computer inside.

DEXTER

"Would you like to meet a ghost?" -
when you say yes maybe that's their
invitation. So we just have to
make sure nobody else says yes.

A sickened look comes to Tim's face. Mattie sees it, knows
what it means.

MATTIE

You already did?

TIM

I thought it was a joke.

ISABELLE

This is so retarded. Like it
matters what we say to some stupid
pop-up question.

Isabelle stands to go.

MATTIE

Meaning you said yes?

ISABELLE

Meaning I was sick of it coming up
on my screen all the time so I
clicked it to make it stop. And
you know what? I haven't seen any
ghosts and I'm not planning on
killing myself.

With an admonishing glance she exits. The door closing in
the b.g. Then, in her absence:

DEXTER
Who else got them, the emails?

MATTIE
Probably everybody in Josh's
address book.

TIM
And everybody in theirs.

The remaining three weigh the implications in silence. And
as we PAN over their HAUNTED YOUNG FACES -

DR WATERSON (V.O.)
I could quote you the statistics on
college-age suicide...

INT. DR WATERSON'S OFFICE - DAY

MATTIE'S PROFILE - eyes glazed, devoid of emotion - as she
stares out the window at CAMPUS.

DR WATERSON (O.S.)
...But you probably already know
them. Frankly, I can't imagine how
you must feel.

He is sitting in the b.g., more of a SILHOUETTE than an
actual presence in the scene, Mattie never turning to look at
him, her voice detached, like her gaze -

MATTIE
I didn't come here for you to make
me feel better. I came here to
tell you...

DR WATERSON
Tell me what, Mattie?

MATTIE
Josh didn't kill himself. Stone
didn't. And the others...

DR WATERSON
Which others?

Students crossing campus, seen through Mattie's reflection.

MATTIE
The ones that come next.

INT. THRIFT SHOP / SURPLUS STORE - DAY

Isabelle and Mattie browsing racks of second-hand clothes and Army surplus. Mattie is just going through the motions with the shopping and, to some extent, her friendship. Isabelle holds up a pair of silk panties with the word Tasty in silver sparkles on them.

ISABELLE
Gross.

Mattie says nothing, barely meets her eye. Isabelle, sensing the emotional distance that's opened between them -

ISABELLE
Listen, I'm not trying to blow you off, okay? I just don't want to think about it anymore. Maybe thinking about it is what makes it real...

MATTIE
Who are you trying to convince, me or you?

Isabelle shrugs.

ISABELLE
Can we just stop thinking about it?

With some hesitation Mattie nods yeah, okay, making a genuine attempt. Isabelle, appreciative of the effort, puts the Tasty panties back on the shelf, eyeing them a moment longer.

ISABELLE
I should send them to my mom. She's sleeping with her yoga instructor. She's his little downward-facing-dog. Bark, bitch! Good doggie.

And as Mattie does her best to smile...

INT. CAMPUS SHUTTLE - DAY

Mattie riding to campus on a rainy afternoon, listening to her iPod. She's sitting up front, just behind the driver, detached look on her face. She gazes out at the rain-soaked streets going by. Her own face reflected faintly in the window glass. Her breath clouds it. She wipes it away.

Sitting back, exhausted, her gaze finds the driver's rear view mirror.

MATTIE'S POV (IN MIRROR) - the OTHER STUDENTS riding in the seats behind her.

And then she SEES something that sends a chill through her -

A DARK FIGURE sitting in the shadows at the back of the bus. Menacing. Broad in the shoulders. No neck to speak of.

She spins around, looking over her shoulder.

Nothing there. Just shadows. Checks the mirror again.

Shadows.

EXT. DEXTER'S APARTMENT - DAY

Mattie, visibly shaken, standing with Dexter in his living room. We hear the SHRILL WHISTLE of a tea kettle in the b.g., like a scream welling up inside her, gathering strength.

Dexter goes into the kitchen and takes the kettle off the burner. We can see him in there pouring two cups of tea. He comes back in and hands one to Mattie. She wraps her fingers around the cup as though to warm herself by its heat.

He sits down on the sofa. And it's clear that Mattie is waiting for him to say something in response to what she's just finished telling him. Finally -

DEXTER

You're sure you saw something?

Mattie nods yes. Scared. Self-conscious. At her most vulnerable.

MATTIE
Do you think I'm crazy?

He looks at her. His expression impossible to read.

DEXTER
I would have if I hadn't seen what
was on that thing.

Mattie takes a sip of tea to calm her nerves. It doesn't help. Shaken by a grim realization -

MATTIE
I think I'm next.

She looks at Dexter and loses it for a second. He comes over and puts his arm around her, more like a big brother than a boyfriend, perhaps somewhere between the two.

By degrees Mattie composes herself. And unable to ignore her fear, she confronts it, walking slowly over to the box in the corner that has Josh's computer inside.

MATTIE
Are all his old files still on
here?

Dexter nods.

DEXTER
I haven't touched a thing.

INT. DEXTER'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

ON THE COMPUTER SCREEN - an EMAIL MESSAGE opens. Closes. Another one opens. Closes. This continues as...

Wider, we see Mattie methodically going through the email logs on Josh's computer. When she clicks on the individual SENDER NAMES it highlights three or four messages at a time - all the related emails in a typical "thread" of correspondence.

It's clear she's not enjoying this, going through her dead boyfriend's emails. The next one she opens is of more interest than the others. Dexter glances over her shoulder.

DEXTER
Find something?

Mattie nods yes. And with a blank expression -

MATTIE
(reading text)
Don't call for a while. I need
some distance. I know you'll
understand.

Dexter sees the SENDER NAME: MATTIE. SUBJECT: US.

DEXTER
Wish you didn't send it?

We're looking at Mattie's profile - and it's only when she
turns to Dexter that we see the guilt and regret.

She closes the email and then notices the window - how dark
it's getting outside.

MATTIE
What time is it?

DEXTER
Eleven thirty.

MATTIE
Shit. I should go.

She stands up, putting on her coat.

DEXTER
(re: computer)
You wanna take it with you?

Mattie shakes her head - definitely not.

She grabs her bag and goes to the door. But pauses after
she's opened it, daunted by the world of shadows outside.

DEXTER
You want a ride?

She turns and looks at him - definitely.

INT. DEXTER'S RAMBLER - NIGHT

Dexter pulls up to Mattie's apartment. She pauses as she
opens the door, looks at him -

MATTIE

Thanks for not thinking I'm crazy.

Dexter nods okay. Mattie gets out of the car.

EXT. MATTIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Mattie goes up the walk to her apartment, opens the door. Waves to Dexter that she's okay. He drives off.

But the sight of the darkened apartment freezes her in the doorway. Who knows what lurks inside. She can go no further, gripped by a sudden paralyzing fear.

She takes out her cell phone, speed-dialing.

ISABELLE (V.O.)

(filtered)

Mattie, you okay?

MATTIE

(into phone)

I'm afraid to go in my apartment.

INT. MATTIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Mattie and Isabelle sitting at the kitchen table eating Thai take-out. Neither is talking much, neither eating much, the mood appropriately tense. Isabelle spears a rice noodle with her fork and, as she holds it up, it reminds her of something.

ISABELLE

Little hint why I broke up with my last boyfriend.

She dangles the noodle flaccidly on the fork, giving it a little side-to-side jiggle. Mattie can't help but smile. Isabelle cracks up. And then the moment passes and they're both silent, reality setting in again.

MATTIE

Thanks for staying with me.

Isabelle nods sure, no problem. And perhaps sensing Isabelle's skepticism -

MATTIE
It was real, Iz. I saw it.

ISABELLE
(nods; not sure)
Okay.

INT. MATTIE'S APARTMENT - LATER

Isabelle, in bed clothes, says goodnight from the doorway of Mattie's room -

ISABELLE
Wake me up if you need anything.

Mattie, arranging blankets and a pillow on the sofa in the living room -

MATTIE
I will.

ISABELLE
Nite.

MATTIE
Nite.

Isabelle closes the door.

INT. MATTIE'S APARTMENT - LATER

Mattie, lying on the sofa, staring with apprehension at the front door.

She looks away and closes her eyes. Then opens them and looks at the front door again.

She gets up off the sofa and takes the roll of RED TAPE from her bag and goes over to the front door. She pauses, eyeing the tape, weighing the potential foolishness of her actions.

But fear wins out.

And as she tears a long strip off the roll, pressing it firmly into place along the leading edge of the door...

INT. MATTIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

CLOSE ON MATTIE'S FACE - Breathing deeply, lost to exhaustion. Hold on that for a moment. Then, BINK! That little computer sound comes from across the room.

And a moment later, the light of a computer ILLUMINATES HER FACE.

Her eyes pop open. Hold, then -

WIDER - Mattie sits bolt upright. Looks over at her computer.

It's up and running, its screen glowing like a beacon in the dark of the room.

INT. DEXTER'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Dexter up late, shirtless, smoking at his kitchen table. And his computer does the same as Mattie's - BLINKING to life in the darkened living room in the b.g.

He turns and looks at it. That's interesting. Takes a long drag on his cigarette. Puts it out in an ash tray. Gets up from the table.

He pauses in the kitchen doorway, obscuring our view of the computer for a moment, his body silhouetted in the HAZY CORONA of LIGHT spilling from the darkened room.

INT. DEXTER'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Crossing the living room, Dexter sits down in front of Josh's computer.

ON THE SCREEN - the red-shirted man is there, pulling that black plastic bag up over his head. Each time, just before the bag comes off the head, there's a little electronic flick and the image goes back to square one, the man reaching up for the bag one more time.

The phone RINGS on Dexter's desk. He calmly picks it up, never taking his eyes off the computer screen, knowing instinctively who it is.

DEXTER
(into phone; deadpan)
I'm in your head. You can't stop
thinking about me.

MATTIE (V.O.)
(filtered)
Are you watching this?

DEXTER
(into phone; deadpan)
Ooooh yeah.

INT. MATTIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Mattie, phone to ear, sitting at her computer, features cast
in the garish glow.

CLOSE ON THE SCREEN - One of the figures appears to be
screaming at the floor. Another strangling himself with his
own bare hands.

MATTIE
(into phone)
Where is this coming from...?

DEXTER (V.O.)
(filtered)
Still working on that.

As Mattie watches, we see a DARK FIGURE appear in the hallway
behind her. It moves silently toward her. Sensing movement
now, Mattie spins, nearly jumping out of her seat -

ISABELLE. Half-asleep.

ISABELLE
What's going on...?

MATTIE
It's just Dexter.

From here Isabelle catches sight of the SCREEN. The strange
rituals of the shadowy forms. She comes closer to watch for
a moment, standing there in her bed clothes, half asleep.
Mattie, continuing to Dexter -

MATTIE
(into phone)
Have you tried printing?

DEXTER (V.O.)
(filtered)
No, does it work - ?

She holds down three keys simultaneously, a printscreen command. Checks her printer. Nothing. Dormant.

MATTIE
(into phone)
Guess not.

Isabelle meantime finds herself locked in the EERIE STARE of a shadowy female figure.

ISABELLE
I don't think we should be watching
this...

MATTIE
(into phone; off Izzie's
look)
Call you tomorrow.

Mattie hangs up. Switches it off the monitor. Powers off the computer. Isabelle looks at her, scared, reproachful -

ISABELLE
Why are you torturing yourself with
this shit?

MATTIE
I'm just watching.

ISABELLE
Some stuff you shouldn't watch.

Isabelle goes back into the bedroom. Closes the door.

Mattie sits there for a moment. Alone. Staring at the blank screen. She turns the monitor to face the wall. Sits there staring at the back of it. And gets a jolt as the PRINTER SUDDENLY WHIRS to life beside her on the desk, spitting out a printed page. And then another. And then two more.

With trepidation Mattie picks up the FOUR PAGES. She brings them under the light, studying each separately, trying to make out the details. But she can't see anything, each page is just gray blotches against a black background...

An idea comes to her and the idea itself is terrifying.

Standing, she tacks the pages on the bulletin board by her desk, edges askew, aligning the dark contours to form one image.

A look of dawning horror comes to her face as she backs slowly away, the image taking shape across the room like a pointillist study -

A HIDEOUS FACE IN A DISJOINTED COLLAGE - STARING AT HER.

The face from the bus. The face of doom itself perhaps. Where the eyes should be there is nothing but shadow.

INT. COMPUTER LAB - NIGHT

Dark. Empty. You can hear the clock TICKING on the wall.

And then, one by one, you hear the hard drives start coming on - CLICK-WHIRRRR, CLICK-WHIRRRR, CLICK-WHIRRRR - you can follow the sound around the room - up this row, down the next, like dominos. On the screens, the pinpoint of PULSING LIGHT, the sound rising to a crescendo as they all SPIN IN UNISON. And then, shutting off, WINDING DOWN to...

SILENCE. The clock TICKING on the wall.

In the darkness, that sinister little pop-up window appears simultaneously on all the screens -

WOULD YOU LIKE TO MEET A GHOST?

EXT. CAMPUS MALL - DUSK

Mattie walking the tree-lined sidewalk to the library. A cold, windy afternoon. The branches swaying overhead. Cell phone to her ear -

DR WATERSON (V.O.)
You've reached the voicemail for Dr
Herman Waterson, I'm unavailable at
the moment, if you're having a
clinical emergency -

Mattie hangs up. Gathering her coat against the chill, she
glances over shoulder to make sure she's not being followed.

But she is. A STRANGE BLUR behind her on the sidewalk,
drifting along under those leafless branches.

Mattie goes white and quickens her pace, not running yet,
because to run is to acknowledge the full horror of what's
happening. But when she looks back again and sees the BLUR
MATCHING HER STRIDE, fear takes over. She breaks into a full
run, dropping her bookbag to free herself of the extra
weight.

RANDOM STUDENT
Hey, Yo! You dropped your bag!

Not looking back, she comes down some steps and cuts between
two OVERFLOWING BIKE RACKS and that's when it happens. In
one of those cruel jokes the universe plays, the BRAKE LEVER
of a ten-speed SNAGS THE BELTLOOP of her jeans.

It's the tiniest piece of fabric, but it's enough to hold
her. And she can see that SHADOWY FORM COMING DOWN THE
STEPS, and in her insane panic she can't get the beltloop
unsnagged - TUGGING and TEARING at it with the bike CLANKING
against the rack, held fast itself by the chain, pulling as
hard as she can, but the fucking beltloop won't break!

And the SHADOWY FORM is upon her, coming along the row of
bicycles now, no more than FIVE FEET AWAY - the EYES BLACK
AND HORRIBLE - RESOLVING INTO MURKY FOCUS - when finally -

The BELTLOOP TEARS AWAY and Mattie is free and running
frantic and blinded by tears across the quad - catching
stares from other STUDENTS who think she's crazy but only of
passing interest as they walk on with friends...

INT. DEXTER'S APARTMENT - DAY

Mattie hasn't stopped shaking. She's terrified.

DEXTER
What did it look like?

Mattie takes from her coat the four PRINTED PAGES from the previous night. She unfolds them and assembles them on the table.

MATTIE

It printed after I shut down.

Dexter sees the FACE ON THE TABLE and takes a big step back, stunned.

DEXTER

Jesus...Fucking...Christ...

MATTIE

That's what I saw on the bus. It's following me.

Dexter looks at her, speechless, looks again at the face. He comes back to the table and flips the pages over. Because he doesn't want that fucking thing looking at him anymore.

In the aftersilence he meets her gaze -

DEXTER

Do you know someone named Zieglar?
D. Zieglar?

MATTIE

(shakes her head)
Why?

DEXTER

Lots of email back and forth
between him and Josh at the end.

INT. DEXTER'S APARTMENT - LATER

A BIG CLUSTER OF HIGHLIGHTED MESSAGES in Josh's email folder. A long thread of correspondence with someone named D. ZIEGLAR.

Pulling back we see Mattie, scanning the SUBJECT LINES. They chronicle Josh's growing desperation:

TECHNICAL QUESTION. IMPORTANT. READ THIS. IT DIDN'T WORK.
CAN YOU HELP? WHY AREN'T YOU RESPONDING? WHERE THE FUCK ARE YOU?!

MATTIE

Can I sit?

Dexter vacates the chair and Mattie sits down. Clicks open the emails, one by one, reading them aloud -

MATTIE

(email #1)

Doug, see attached. Would you like to meet a ghost - is this a known virus?

(email #2)

Doug, please delete all personal information from my account, my system is being hacked.

(email #3)

Doug, please terminate this I.D. from the database, it is being used by someone that is not me.

(email #4)

Doug, are you not responding or is someone deleting your email replies before I read them? Please contact me by telephone ASAP.

DEXTER

He was trying to shut down his account.

MATTIE

(thinking a moment)

Where's your student directory?

Dexter rummages through a pile of junk on his desk. Hands Mattie the student directory. She flips to Z. Runs a finger down the page.

MATTIE

Douglas Ziegler. Grad CIS.

DEXTER

Systems.

INT. DORMITORY - NIGHT

Mattie and Dexter knock on a door that says R.A. and has a small dry-erase bulletin board on it with various messages scribbled thereupon, e.g. "Martha, I lost my key - Kim. :("

The door opens, answered by a quiet female grad student R.A.

MATTIE
Does Douglas Zieglar live here?

R.A.
(nods)
Room 403...

Mattie and Dexter turn to go.

R.A.
...But I think he's away. Hasn't
been around for a while.

Mattie and Dexter slow, exchanging a wary glance.

MATTIE
(to R.A.)
You need to look in his room.

R.A.
Why?

MATTIE
Because he's in there.

INT. DORM HALLWAY - NIGHT

Room 403.

Mattie and Dexter wait behind the R.A. as she knocks on the door and then knocks one more time just to be sure.

R.A.
Douglas?

No answer. Fumbling with a ring of master KEYS, the R.A. finds the right one. Puts it in the lock. Turns. CLICK.

But when she pushes on the door, it seems to stick. She pushes harder. It's jammed. Leans her weight on it. Won't budge.

R.A.
Maybe if we all try?

Mattie and Dexter join in, the three of them pushing, pushing, pushing.

And finally, with a loud RIPPING sound, it comes free...

INT. DOUGLAS ZIEGLAR'S DORM ROOM - DAY

Mattie, Dexter and the R.A. step inside the door. It's pitch black in here.

R.A.
Douglas...?

There's no answer. The R.A. flicks on the light. And what they see makes all their mouths fall open in astonishment -

THE ENTIRE ROOM IS COVERED IN RED TAPE.

Walls, floor, ceiling, windows - every square inch of it, like a homemade quarantine chamber.

R.A.
What the fuck - ?

Red tape dangles in strands from the door they just forced open. It has been applied so heavily that in places the furniture itself has been taped to the floor. A chair, a desk - welded down by red tape, immovable. The computer screen taped over. Empty rolls litter the floor, overflow the trash can.

And in his desperation, the occupant has even fashioned a small peephole in the window, covered with a re-sealable flap of red tape, through which he could watch the comings and goings of people on campus.

Mattie and Dexter register the bizarre scene separately, then their gazes come together in a look of haunted dismay.

They explore the room. By the bed, Mattie finds TEN ROLLS of RED TAPE in a stack. Leftovers. She discreetly tucks them into her bag.

Dexter finds on the floor a printed email from Josh to Douglas that simply says - "DON'T LET THEM TOUCH YOU."

He shows it to Mattie. She stares at it for a moment then comes over to the desk. Finds a wallet and some keys. Nearby, a cell phone and a pager, both with the batteries yanked out.

She flips open the wallet. Inside, a DRIVER'S LICENSE and STUDENT I.D. On each, a photo of DOUGLAS ZIEGLAR. Smiling. Dark hair. Glasses. Ordinary guy.

The R.A., seeing what's been left on the desk -

R.A.
Must not've planned on being gone
long.

Dexter trades glances with Mattie and comes over to see for himself what Douglas Zieglar looks like. And there's no way to reconcile that ordinary face in the photo with this bizarre room.

DEXTER
Maybe he didn't plan on coming
back.

INT. CAFETERIA - DAY

Mattie, Isabelle, Tim and Dexter sitting together at a table. Isabelle is peeling an orange, checking email on her Blackberry. Mattie scanning the noticeably more quiet, noticeably less full cafeteria.

MATTIE
This place seem a little empty to
you guys?

The others take a look around and nod - yeah, that's strange.

INT. COFFEEHOUSE - NIGHT

Dexter closing up after hours, mopping the floor behind the food counter. It's 3 a.m. He's alone. Most of the lights are off, leaving the coffeehouse in near total darkness.

In the back room, he empties the mop bucket. Rinsing it, he pauses, thinking he heard something (over the running water) in the other room.

He turns off the faucet and listens...

There is it again. Strange. A faint RUSTLING noise. He exits the back room and scans the coffeehouse.

Nobody there. But he hears the noise again from around the corner. A faint CRINKLING of PAPER or PLASTIC followed by a WHEEZING sound.

He comes out from behind the food counter, circling past the register to have a look on the far side of the coffeehouse. And there he sees SOMEONE sitting in the shadows, almost totally obscured by darkness.

DEXTER

Sorry, man, we're closed.

No reply. But then that strange noise. It almost sounds like he's choking.

DEXTER

Dude, you all right?

Dexter approaches, but stops halfway there, looking more confused than scared, not quite believing what he's seeing -

Sitting at an empty table, arms at his sides, is a MAN IN A RED SHIRT. He has a BLACK PLASTIC BAG OVER HIS HEAD. Every time he inhales the bag sucks back into his mouth with a CRINKLING POP and there's a WHEEZING SOUND as his gaping mouth strains for the breath that never came.

He's suffocating.

Dexter recoils in shock, bumping into tables and chairs, transfixed by the sight, unable to look away as -

The figure's hands drift up and take hold of the bag. As they lift it, it catches on the jawline and pulls taut, a face rendered grotesquely through the plastic as it stretches, ripping, tearing away like a creature birthing itself.

Dexter, reeling backwards, practically falling over tables and chairs, gasps at what's under the bag -

ANOTHER BAG. Sucking back into the figure's mouth. The end is the beginning.

Dexter makes it to the door and gets the hell out of there.

EXT. CAMPUS BUS STOP - DAY

Early morning. Mattie steps down off the bus. Sees Dexter waiting there for her. A harrowed look on his face.

MATTIE

What...?

DEXTER
I think we're both next.

Hold on Mattie as she registers this.

INT. COMPUTER SYSTEMS LAB - DAY

A computer lab. Not the one we saw earlier, one more specialized in its applications. A GRADUATE CIS STUDENT is keying data into his laptop, highly technical work, which he interrupts, as Mattie holds out Douglas Zieglar's student I.D.

GRAD SYSTEMS STUDENT
Yeah, I know Zig... what are you doing with his ID?

MATTIE
Trying to return it. I found it on campus.

The guy nods oh. Dexter gives Mattie a look, acknowledging the well-told lie.

MATTIE
Any idea what he was working on?

GRAD SYSTEMS STUDENT
Why do you care?

MATTIE
Somebody I know had contact with him before they died. I'm just trying to figure out what the connection is.

The Grad CIS Student holds her gaze for a moment, disarmed.

GRAD SYSTEMS STUDENT
It was a telecommunications project. The university gave him some money to help configure a new wireless platform they invested in. Ultrawideband? Superwideband? The latest technology - in two years it'll be the standard and two years after that it'll be obsolete.

(smiles)

(MORE)

GRAD SYSTEMS STUDENT(cont'd)

Anyway, something went wrong and he
had to shut it down.

DEXTER

What went wrong?

GRAD SYSTEMS STUDENT

I don't know, but... nobody's
really seen him since.

MATTIE

Did he say anything? To anyone?

A telling hesitation, the guy seems a little embarrassed,
perhaps a little scared.

MATTIE

What did he say?

GRAD SYSTEMS STUDENT

Something really fucked up that I
probably shouldn't repeat.

(beat)

Comes in here late one night, looks
like total shit, like he hasn't
slept for two weeks, comes in,
gives me the weirdest fucking look,
says, 'Something came through.
Somebody opened a backdoor and they
came through and I can't stop
it...' I'm like, Zig, man, what
the fuck are you talking about?
You know what he said?

(beat; eerie smile)

Ghosts.

EXT. CAMPUS - DAY

Mattie walking alone across campus, casting wary glances at
darkened windows and doorways.

INT. LECTURE HALL - DAY

A gray-haired Middle-Eastern PROFESSOR of religious studies
lecturing his class. Mattie enters and sits down in the
back.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES PROFESSOR

- We like to imagine some great divide between the different realms of existence. You see it in the mythologies. A river. A forest. It's meant to be comforting, I would suppose, the notion of a barrier - a wall to separate here from there, the before from the after. This is the great lie we all tell ourselves. The other side is right there. What separates us is like gossamer. And the journey is as simple as poking a hole.

Haunted look on her face, Mattie scans the lecture hall. It's almost empty.

INT. MATTIE'S APARTMENT - DUSK

Mattie enters. Puts down her bag. Scans her dusk-shadowed apartment. And sees a FAINT BLUE GLOW ON THE WALL the computer monitor is now facing.

It's on again.

She comes over to shut it off, but hesitates, finger poised above the power button, and slowly turns the monitor around to face her for a moment -

ON THE SCREEN - a figure moving IN AND OUT OF FRAME, quickly, agitatedly, ACCELERATING as he drifts nearer the f.g., where his movements become increasingly frenetic and horrible to watch, and suddenly HIS FACE is right on top of us, ZIPPING PAST OUT OF FRAME in a SLOW-MOTION BLUR from left to right.

The image stutters and the BLURRY-FACED FLYBY portion repeats once before the scene resets to the same slow, fretful pacing it began with.

Transfixed, Mattie fiddles with the BRIGHTNESS and CONTRAST CONTROLS at the bottom of the monitor, trying to bring the figure's identity into focus.

ON THE SCREEN - the SETTINGS FLUCTUATE to both extremes as Mattie turns the knobs - BLACK SCREEN, WHITE SCREEN, HIGH CONTRAST, LOW CONTRAST, etc. - and then settle in at HIGH CONTRAST and near FULL BRIGHTNESS. This is image so washed-out it is almost white.

Poised inches from the monitor, Mattie watches as the figure drifts closer again, accelerating now, HEAD JERKING around violently, ARMS FLAILING at unseen terrors, and here comes that FACE FLYING UP AT HER IN A SLOW-MOTION BLUR.

Mattie's voice comes from the back of her throat -

MATTIE

Tim...?

ON TIM'S BLURRED FACE AS IT GOES PAST AGAIN - TORMENTED AND SCREAMING IN SLOW MOTION.

Mattie grabs her phone and dials his number, eyes never leaving the monitor. One RING. A second RING.

ON THE COMPUTER SCREEN - the fretful figure, in what is now seemingly a LIVE IMAGE, makes his way in fits and starts across the room. And picks up his phone!!

Unlike the image, the voice on the other end of the phone sounds normal -

TIM (V.O.)

(filtered)

Hello...?

MATTIE

(into phone)

It's Mattie, are you okay?

TIM (V.O.)

(filtered)

Yeah, I'm fine...

MATTIE

(into phone)

You sure?

TIM (V.O.)

(filtered)

Yeah, I'm fine...

MATTIE

(into phone)

Okay, 'cause I don't know what this means, but you're on my computer.

TIM (V.O.)
 (filtered)
 Yeah, I'm fine...

His response doesn't quite track with the conversation and suddenly Mattie isn't sure who she's talking to.

MATTIE
 (into phone)
 Tim...?

TIM (V.O.)
 (filtered)
 Yeah, I'm fine...

And looking closer at the screen, Mattie realizes that the IMAGE IS HICCUPING, skipping back to the same short segment again and again, Tim's voice on the phone matching the jump, repeating itself in an endless loop, weirdly disembodied -

TIM (V.O.)
 (filtered)
 Yeah, I'm fine...

Mattie drops the phone and heads for the door. CAMERA stays on the SCREEN, with Tim's voice coming from the phone handset Mattie dropped in the chair, the line still open -

Faint click, image jump.

TIM (V.O.)
 (filtered)
 Yeah, I'm fine...

Faint click, image jump.

TIM (V.O.)
 (filtered)
 Yeah, I'm fine...

EXT. TIM'S HOUSE - DUSK

Mattie crosses the yard to Tim's house.

She pauses at the steps, seeing that the door is slightly ajar and has been partially sealed with red tape from the inside. It appears to have been forced open, or pulled open by someone in a hurry to get out.

Mattie calls through the crack -

MATTIE

Tim?

No reply.

She takes hold of the door handle and gives a hard tug and the tape that's clinging loosely the doorframe comes free with a familiar RIPPING sound.

INT. HALLWAY OF TIM'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

There is a pile of mail lying under the mail slot in the front door. Three days' worth. Tim hasn't been here for a while.

Mattie comes down the hall, searching the house room by room.

MATTIE

Tim...?

BEDROOM - empty.

BATHROOM - empty.

KITCHEN - empty.

She comes into the LIVING ROOM, recognizable as the room she was watching on the computer.

No sign of Tim. He's just gone.

As she turns to go, she sees that the PHONE, the one she just saw him answer, has been left off the hook.

Strange. She comes over and puts it to her ear.

MATTIE

(into phone)

Hello...?

Her own voice bounces back at her, distant, laced with static.

MATTIE (V.O.)

(echo)

Hello...?

MATTIE
 (into phone)
 Anybody there...?

MATTIE (V.O.)
 (echo)
 Anybody there...?

Spooked, she hangs it up.

EXT. BUS STOP / OFF CAMPUS - DUSK

Dusk. Mattie sitting alone at a bus stop, grim-faced, cell phone to her ear.

MATTIE
 (into phone)
 Izzie, something happened...

ISABELLE (V.O.)
 (filtered)
 What - ?

MATTIE
 (into phone)
 I don't know, I was just at Tim's,
 I saw him on my compu --

Her voice trails off at the sight of something off-screen.

ISABELLE (V.O.)
 (filtered)
 Mattie...?

MATTIE
 (hanging up; staring;
 haunted)
 Call you back.

Inside a house across the street, a YOUNG COUPLE is frantically sealing their windows with RED TAPE. The guy tosses the girl a new roll and she runs to next window and tears down the blinds, just rips them from the wall, and starts sealing it, her TERRIFIED FACE disappearing from view one strip of red tape at a time.

The bus pulls up, and the DRIVER, seeming paranoid and rushed, calls to her through the open door.

DRIVER
Comin' or not?

Mattie is slow to respond and the guy just closes the door and drives off. Off Mattie's silent stare, we see -

The taped window on the house across the street - A BRIGHT RED SQUARE.

INT. DEXTER'S APARTMENT - DAY

Mattie at Josh's computer, opening and closing files and folders, the same methodical search as before, but faster, a sense of urgency...

She clicks on an UNMARKED FOLDER and -

The SCREEN IS SUDDENLY FILLED with COMPLEX CODING. The same same coding we saw earlier in Josh's apartment.

MATTIE
Holy shit.

Dexter comes over, has a look.

DEXTER
Jesus, what'd you click?

MATTIE
(re: stuff on screen)
What is this...?

Dexter scrolls down. Deciphering.

DEXTER
Was Josh a hacker?

MATTIE
(nods; a bit defensive)
Little hobby of his. Why?

DEXTER
(re: coding)
Looks like some kind of insertion
program...
(off her look - what's
that?)
(MORE)

DEXTER(cont'd)

Nuisance viruses anyone can write,
one like this - you gotta know what
you're doing. There's a secure
network you want access to? This
opens a backdoor. In you go.

Dexter scrolls through the program language, admiring it in a
way.

MATTIE

So, what was the target?

DEXTER

(shrugs)

Ask the author.

ON THE COMPUTER - line after line of complex code language
going past.

Suddenly the SCREEN GOES BLACK. And a DARK ROOM APPEARS.
Dexter looks baffled.

DEXTER

The fuck...? Did you touch
something?

MATTIE

No...

DEXTER

It's still getting the feed...?

MATTIE

Why wouldn't it?

Dexter reaches behind the computer. Holds up the NETWORK
HARDWIRE - DISCONNECTED.

DEXTER

I'm not even plugged in.

Mattie gives him a look - what?

DEXTER

It's not coming through the LAN
connection.

MATTIE

What's it coming through?

Beat. Dexter opens the side of the computer and looks around inside. He sees something. Reaches in past the bundles of wires. Pops a wireless network card from an internal slot.

And the SCREEN IMMEDIATELY GOES BLANK.

DEXTER

The air.

INT. RAMBLER - DAY

Dexter and Mattie driving through the neighborhoods around campus, scanning the treelines.

MATTIE

What size are we looking for?

DEXTER

Large. A signal this big takes a serious transmitter.

As they drive on, continuing to search -

MATTIE

So this whole town is a hotspot?

Dexter nods yeah.

MATTIE

How would we not know that?

DEXTER

Wi-fi stuff is all frequency specific. If they aren't looking for it, you'd never know it was there.

MATTIE

But I thought he said it was shut down?

DEXTER

Somebody must have turned it back on.

(looks at her)

Or something.

INT. HALLWAY OF ISABELLE'S BUILDING - NIGHT

Isabelle comes down the hallway of her apartment building carrying a basket of laundry. There's a strange sound in the air. It takes her a moment to zero in on what it is.

She stops at a neighbor's door, listening. Inside, a CLOCK ALARM is BEEPING away. Nobody turns it off.

Weird. She continues walking.

INT. LAUNDRY ROOM - NIGHT

Isabelle sits reading in a poorly-lit basement laundry room while her clothes finish their wash cycle. A crappy facility with clumps of lint on the floor and no windows. Five or six coin-operated top-load washers and a row of those industrial-size tumbler dryers with the big circular glass doors along one wall.

Isabelle checks her watch. It won't be long now. There is another GIRL folding her clothes quietly at the folding table. She finishes and heads off with her basket.

GIRL

Nite.

ISABELLE

Nite.

The girl exits. The sound of her FOOTSTEPS receding down the hall. Isabelle continues reading. Turns the page. It's a good book.

But now the lone fluorescent light on the ceiling, which Isabelle is sitting under, gives a little FLICKER and DIMS, casting the room into that eerie PINKISH-HUED HALFLIGHT you get when a fluorescent bulb tries to reset itself.

Isabelle gives it a glance, unable to read in this light, willing the damn thing to fix itself. And it does, just now, fluttering back to FULL BRIGHTNESS.

Isabelle lowers her gaze back to the book. Not a second later, the washing machine beside her shuts off with a loud BUZZER noise. It gives her only the slightest of starts, an annoyance more than anything else.

She puts her book face down in the chair and goes to the washer and opens the lid and starts taking out her clothes.

She walks the first handful over to the tumbler dryers on the opposite wall, the wall closest to the exit but farthest from the light, which leaves the machines, and the corridor they adjoin, almost entirely in shadow.

Swinging open the glass door, she tosses the clothes in and goes back for the next handful. And it's as she is reaching into the washer that she hears something strange -

The faint WET SLAP of something falling onto the concrete behind her.

Unlike the lightbulb and the buzzer, this scares the shit out of her. It takes a moment for her to even look. Slowly, she does and sees -

Some of her wet clothes SPILLING FROM THE DRYER onto the floor.

The way it looks, it's impossible to tell what's causing it. It might be gravity. Perhaps she didn't put them in far enough and they shifted. You can see her thinking thoughts like this, trying to manage her fear, trying not to panic. But gravity or not, the sight of them, the wet clothes inching toward the floor, is seriously frightening and stops her from coming any closer.

Lowering her head, she tries to look inside the dryer. Too dark. All she sees is that BIG ROUND BLACK HOLE receding into nothingness.

And then she realizes she's just scaring herself. There is nothing in the dryer. How could there be? Come on, don't be an idiot.

Bravely, she steps closer and kneels and picks up her clothes, one at a time, never taking her eyes off the open dryer, which looms no more than ten inches from her face. Done, she pauses, trying to look inside the dryer from this closer angle before she tosses the clothes back in. And suddenly she finds it impossible to draw the next breath.

Because there is something in there.

Clothes falling from her hands, she goes slowly backwards, shaking her head no, no, no, this can't be happening.

And just now, the fluorescent light on the ceiling FLICKERS and DIMS again, casting the room into the pinkish half-light as it BUZZES and STUTTERS trying to reset.

And in this dim, buzzing, shuddering light, we see a HAND reach out slowly and grip the edge of the dryer. A LEG snaking out next, pressing its foot squarely to the floor, seeming at once human and inhuman, these movements, the limbs unfolding like a contortionist. Another HAND emerging now, gripping the other side of the door, and the other LEG coming out arrow-straight before bending awkwardly - appearing almost to snap - at the knee.

Isabelle retreats as far as she can go, banging up against the washers behind her, letting out a tortured cry as she realizes she's trapped in here, the exit on the other side of the room, blocked by whatever is coming from the dryer.

And all that remains to be seen is the face and here it comes, the hands, sinewy and spiderlike, pulling the head slowly forward into the FLICKERING LIGHT.

And what we see in those intervals between light and shadow is hideous and leering and coming for her.

INT. CORRIDOR TO LAUNDRY ROOM - NIGHT

From a distance, down the corridor, we see the light spilling from the laundry room STOP FLICKERING as the fluorescent bulb inside flutters back to FULL BRIGHTNESS.

And we hear Isabelle let out a SCREAM - a scream made more chilling by the fact that it never reaches full volume, cut short by something clamping down over her mouth.

EXT. QUAD - DAY

Gray skies. The quad lies before us in eerie stillness. The racks of bikes no one is using. The KIOSK of campus news in the b.g.

Closer, we see the kiosk's many postings. Faded. Fluttering in the breeze. A dozen suicide prevention notices among them.

Out of nowhere, some KID WE'VE NEVER SEEN BEFORE runs up, terrified, panting, looking around. And slaps a notice up on the board. Jamming a thumbtack through it.

And as he turns and runs off, looking back over his shoulder to make sure he isn't being followed, we see -

It's a PHOTOCOPY of JOSH'S NOTE, and it looks like the hundredth Xerox that's been made:

IT KEEPS THEM OUT. DON'T KNOW WHY.

There's a piece of red tape stuck to it as a sample. And beneath that, under the title "SEALING A ROOM", someone has scribbled a list of how-to instructions:

- 1) DOORS AND WINDOWS - MUST BE AIRTIGHT!
- 2) DON'T FORGET KEYHOLE.
- 3) DISCONNECT COMPUTER.
- 4) HIDE.

INT. LECTURE HALL - DAY

The Psych Professor, at the lectern preparing his notes, surveys the rows of desks.

A third of the class is missing.

PSYCH PROFESSOR
Flu season is upon us. Make sure
your classmates get the assignment.

Mattie looks at Isabelle's seat beside her. Empty. A dark thought sends her scrambling for the door.

EXT. LECTURE HALL - DAY

Mattie emerges from the lecture hall, cell phone ringing to her ear.

MATTIE
Come on, Izzie...

Another RING. Then:

RECORDED VOICE
The voicemail box you have called
is full and cannot accept any more
incoming messages at this time.
Please try again later -

Mattie goes white, takes off at a sprint.

EXT. ISABELLE'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Morning mist hangs like fog. Silhouette of a girl running through it.

MATTIE - her eyes instinctively scanning the rooftop of Isabelle's building as she approaches.

INT. HALLWAY OF ISABELLE'S BUILDING - DAY

Mattie comes running down the hallway to Isabelle's door. Hammers on it with a fist.

MATTIE
Izzie!

The door CLICKS OPEN from the force of Mattie's knock.

INT. ISABELLE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Mattie scans the room from the doorway. No sign of Isabelle. She enters, closing the door behind her. Comes over to the table. Her face darkens at what she sees.

Isabelle's keys and student I.D. lying there.

She comes down the hallway, scanning the rooms as they go by.

KITCHEN - empty.

BEDROOM - empty.

BATHROOM - empty.

She comes back up the hall, enters the bedroom.

INT. ISABELLE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Mattie walks in, crosses to the desk by the dresser, eyeing Isabelle's computer. Her flip-flops there by the chair.

Turning, coming slowly past the bed, Mattie gets a sudden jolt as she realizes -

SOMEONE IS LYING MOTIONLESS UNDER THE BEDSHEETS, the blanket pulled up over their face like a corpse.

MATTIE

Izzie?

No reply. Mattie comes slowly closer.

MATTIE

Iz?

She comes closer. Takes hold of the sheet and slowly, not wanting to see what she is about to see, pulls it down to reveal the face.

ISABELLE

Rigid with terror, eyes wide open.

MATTIE

Oh my God...

And as Isabelle's terrified eyes slowly make their way to Mattie's...

INT. ISABELLE'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Isabelle sits wrapped in a blanket on the floor, shivering, staring into the abyss, her eyes half dead. Mattie at her side. Isabelle's speech is labored, her detachment punctuated by moments of profound intimacy where she looks at her best friend and her eyes jolt back to life, reflecting terror and confusion.

ISABELLE

You know what dying tastes like?
Metal. Metal - why does it taste
like metal? You keep trying to
spit it out but you can't 'cause
it's not a taste it's you.

(MORE)

ISABELLE (cont'd)

And the smell...

(tears welling; repulsed)

...the smell - you don't want to
breathe 'cause everytime you
breathe it's another breath of it
inside you, but you can't stop
'cause there's only one way to stop
breathing...

(looks at Mattie; breaking
down)

...there's only one way...

(sobbing; total collapse)

I'm sorry...I'm sorry...I wanna die
but I'm afraid to do it...

Mattie holds her, crying with her.

MATTIE

You're not gonna die.

Isabelle looks at her, red-eyed, through her misery -

ISABELLE

I want to.

(long trembling stare)

Don't let them touch you.

Mattie, trembling herself -

MATTIE

What are they?

ISABELLE

Evil.

MATTIE

What do they want?

ISABELLE

All of us.

She holds Mattie's gaze - sad and pleading, the same haunted
stare we saw from Josh and Stone.

ISABELLE

You need to go. They're coming.

INT. ISABELLE'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Mattie putting Isabelle to sleep in her bed. She's shivering under the covers. Trapped in some cold dark place. Mattie sits down beside her, trying to sound reassuring, brushing the stray hair from her face -

MATTIE

I'm gonna get help. It'll be okay.

Isabelle looks up at her, childlike, and it's the last thing Mattie will ever hear Isabelle say -

ISABELLE

That's not true.

Mattie has no answer. As she stands to go and Isabelle holds something out to her. Something she's been clutching in her hand under the pillow.

A roll of red tape.

She gives a pleading look at the open door. Mattie hesitates briefly, then takes the tape from her and walks out.

INT. ISABELLE'S HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

From the hallway Mattie stares at Isabelle shivering in the bed. Then she closes the door and goes to work, sealing the edges with red tape.

INT. DEXTER'S APARTMENT - DAY

Barely holding herself together, Mattie tells Dexter -

MATTIE

She won't leave. If I don't get her out of there...

She can't finish the sentence.

DEXTER

We'll get her out.

Mattie's cell phone BEEPS. She grabs it, thinking it's Isabelle. But it's a TEXT MESSAGE -

Flashing on the display - "Urgent Message"

She presses the view button.

ON THE DISPLAY - "MEET ME AT LIBRARY. NOW. URGENT."

DEXTER
Who's it from?

MATTIE
Private sender.

Dexter doesn't like the sound of it. Mattie types a reply into her keypad, hits SEND -

ON THE DISPLAY - "WHO ARE YOU?"

After a moment the reply comes up:

ON THE DISPLAY - "4TH FLOOR. 10 MINS. URGENT."

Mattie and Dexter exchange a wary look.

INT. LIBRARY STACKS - DUSK

DING. The elevator doors snap open. Mattie and Dexter step out. The floor is abandoned.

They come walking down an aisle between two high stacks of books. The lights flickering on overhead in the familiar way, lighting the path.

Up ahead, they can see a DARK FIGURE seated at one of the study tables at the far end of the room. And it could be anyone, the face concealed in shadow. They continue toward him warily.

It is not until they're within twenty feet, when the final row of lights comes on - at the junction between the stacks and a central study area - that the figure's face can be clearly seen.

A grad student in his late twenties. Pale. Gaunt. Paranoid. Recognizable, but only just, from the photo on his driver's license.

DOUGLAS ZIEGLAR.

DOUGLAS ZIEGLAR
Who are you?

MATTIE
Friends of Josh's.

They sit opposite him at the table. There's a silence, no one quite knowing where to begin.

DOUGLAS ZIEGLAR
He's dead, isn't he?

Mattie nods yes.

MATTIE
What did you do?

DOUGLAS ZIEGLAR
What did I do? It's what your goddamn friend did. They were paying me to configure a new wi-fi platform, data transfer rates like you wouldn't believe - gig, gig and a half per second -

DEXTER
We heard.

DOUGLAS ZIEGLAR
Yeah, so did Josh. When we brought it online the fucking prick hacked us, went in and cordoned off some bandwidth for his own private use. Before we even knew what was happening a third party was involved...

MATTIE
What third party?

DOUGLAS ZIEGLAR
That's what we wanted to know, 'cause they were accessing us on a frequency that's not in private or commercial use anywhere on the planet. They got into our system and they started overwriting all the program code. We couldn't stop them so we cut the connection. But they were still there...

DEXTER
(not following)
How? If you cut the connection?

DOUGLAS ZIEGLAR
(yes, exactly)
How. If we cut the connection.
(beat)
They didn't need it anymore. They weren't out there, they were here. They came through.

MATTIE
Came through how?

DOUGLAS ZIEGLAR
I don't know. But we could see them. I mean we didn't know what it was at first, we thought it was radiowave interference, but then somebody noticed it wasn't random. There were patterns to it. When we tried to monitor it, it would stop or change frequencies. It was reacting to us. It was smart. And then we started seeing things around the lab. They looked like shadows. But shadows can't hide under desks. Shadows can't walk across a fucking room in broad daylight...

(beat)
There was some tape we used around the lab - red utility tape - I don't know, it must block the part of the spectrum they need for transmission because somebody figured out they couldn't get through it. So we could keep them out of a room, but we couldn't keep them out. They were coming through so fast - it was just a blur. We grabbed our shit and got the fuck out of there.

In the aftersilence:

DOUGLAS ZIEGLAR
Can I ask you something?
(indicates cell phone)
How did you get this number? It's a private number. Nobody has it.

MATTIE

I didn't, you messaged me, I just replied.

DOUGLAS ZIEGLAR

I didn't message you, you messaged me...

There's a moment of confusion. It's Dexter that puts two and two together for them.

DEXTER

Somebody messaged you both.

Grim pause.

Rising slowly from their seats, Dexter, Mattie and Douglas turn and scan the darkened stacks that surround them.

DOUGLAS ZIEGLAR

Fuck.

Suddenly, in the b.g., a SHADOWY FIGURE darts between two bookcases in a BLURRED STREAK. It happens in the blink of an eye. Mattie catches it in her peripheral vision, whips her head around -

MATTIE

You see that?

Before Dexter or Douglas can reply another SHADOWY FIGURE goes past in a BLUR on the opposite side of them, closer than the first one was. Then another BLURRED STREAK of movement on the opposite side.

Their eyes go to the ELEVATOR on the far end of the room. There's only one way to get to it. Through the middle of the stacks.

On no particular cue they run for it. Straight down the center aisle. Fast as they can. Too fast for the motion-sensitive LIGHTS which LAG BEHIND THEM, putting their escape in that shadowy threshold between light and dark.

POV AS THEY RUN - bookcases flying past in a blur. Over this, their quick, shallow BREATHS.

Heads on swivels, running blind, they see -

All around them, just beyond the perimeter of light cast by the flickering sections overhead, the SHADOWS ARE COMING ALIVE - DARK FORMS growing out of the unlit rows of books!

DEXTER

Oh Christ...!

Suddenly a MASS of DARK FIGURES CONVERGES right in front of them. Mattie sees them first, points them out -

MATTIE

RIGHT THERE!

Dexter cuts right and Mattie cuts left, heading down separate aisles. Douglas breaks off on his own, racing for a fire stair exit.

MATTIE - running alone now, terrified, anything could appear through the SPACES IN THE SHELVES.

DEXTER - takes another sharp turn then another and then stops and backpedals for a moment, look of terror on his face. Everywhere he looks he sees SHADOWY FORMS. Left. Right. There's nowhere for him to go, except back the way he came...

INT. FIRE STAIRS - NIGHT

DOUGLAS ZIEGLAR - meantime throws the open the fire exit and charges down the stairs. Turns the corner to the next flight and halts, sees -

DARK FIGURES ascending in a BLUR.

He reverses direction, but as he races back up the flight he just came down, he sees MORE DARK FIGURES POOLING IN SHADOW on the landing above -

He's trapped.

INT. LIBRARY STACKS - NIGHT

Mattie, running, hears DOUGLAS ZIEGLAR'S SCREAM.

Like a lab rat through a maze, she reaches the end of the stacks, and looks sharply to her right for Dexter. Not there. A flash of horror at the realization that he didn't make it.

INT. ELEVATOR - NIGHT

Mattie runs into the elevator. Hits the G button. But stops herself, holding the door open with her arm, waiting for Dexter, knowing he's still alive because -

THE LIGHTS - flickering on in sections across the ceiling, reveal the ongoing chase, Dexter's sudden turns and backtracks. A desperate effort by him.

And a futile one. Because the lights are getting farther away from the elevator, he's being driven into the far corner.

DEXTER (O.S.)
(from deep in the stacks)
THEY'RE EVERYWHERE!

Mattie can't watch and she can't wait any longer. She lets go of the door. But hits the DOOR OPEN BUTTON at last second, seeing through that last sliver of an opening -

THE LIGHTS - changing direction, coming along the far wall, gaining speed, cutting left toward the middle of the stacks again and suddenly -

DEXTER EMERGES!

Running for his life down that center aisle toward the elevator, eyes fixed on Mattie because he doesn't dare look back, horrible things wheeling chaotically in the shadows behind him.

DEXTER
WAIT!!

Teeth clenched, fists pumping, making it out of there by sheer will alone.

INT. ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

MATTIE'S FINGERS - one holding the DOOR OPEN button, the other poised above the DOOR CLOSE, timing Dexter's approach.

Here he comes and -

She punches DOOR CLOSE.

And as the doors narrow Dexter dives through, hitting the back wall so hard his shoulder leaves a dent in the metal sheeting.

Then, breathless silence. Their EYES watching the floor indicator go from 4 to G. Dexter climbing to his feet. Mattie bracing herself. Not knowing what will be waiting for them at the bottom.

INT. LIBRARY, FIRST FLOOR - DUSK

ON A SECURITY MONITOR - we see an empty study lounge. Looking closer, we see it's not empty. GHOSTLY FIGURES moving through it in BLURRED STREAKS.

Pulling back, we see the other monitors, a console of five at the unmanned security desk by the front door.

ON ANOTHER MONITOR - we see the parking lot outside the library, GHOSTLY FORMS drifting across it. MORE BLURRED STREAKS crossing the quad in the distance. The entire campus is infested.

ON ANOTHER MONITOR - we see the ELEVATORS by the circulation desk. One of the elevators opens and Mattie and Dexter emerge and take off running - OUT OF FRAME.

Moments later they come barreling around the corner by the security desk - visible simultaneously on the MONITOR that shows the front entrance area.

ON MATTIE AND DEXTER - as they run through the turnstiles and the metal detectors and out the front door...

ON THE MONITOR - as FIVE or SIX SHADOWY FIGURES DRIFT INTO FRAME like scavengers around the front door, watching Mattie and Dexter through the glass.

EXT. CAMPUS - DUSK

Mattie and Dexter run across campus, vaguely pursued by the SHADOWY FIGURES. All of a sudden she puts her arm out, stopping him. He thinks she's seen something in front of them.

DEXTER

What?!

MATTIE

We have to tell people.

Mattie's gaze draws Dexter's to the nearby CAFETERIA. All the lights are on.

INT. CAFETERIA - DUSK

The door crashes open. Dexter and Mattie rush in through the a la carte area and cash registers and then stop dead in their tracks, scanning the cafeteria.

All the tables are empty. A few trays of food sitting in front of overturned chairs.

The walls are covered with those same eerie HUMAN-LIKE SMUDGES. Their shapes convey a sense of movement - someone running, someone hiding under a table - the fleeing panic and cowering fear of people in their final moments.

Mattie is speechless, frozen. Dexter backs her toward the door.

EXT. BUS STOP NEAR CAMPUS - DUSK

Dexter and Mattie run up, looking for a bus. None in sight. But what they do see stuns them -

Across the street, an APARTMENT BUILDING - almost all the DOORS and WINDOWS TAPED RED.

Pulling back further, we see the RED DOORS and WINDOWS extend throughout the ENTIRE NEIGHBORHOOD.

DEXTER

We're fuckin' outta here.

MATTIE

I have to get Izzie.

(off his look)

I have to.

Dexter thinks for a second, scanning the empty streets.

DEXTER

I'll get my car, I'll pick you guys up in fifteen minutes. Be ready.

And as they run off in opposite directions...

INT. ISABELLE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Mattie rushes inside, calling out to Isabelle -

MATTIE
Izzie! We're leaving!

She stops just short of the BEDROOM DOOR.

The seal of red tape is broken. It appears to have been forced open from the inside.

We can hear the SHOWER running down the hall. Mattie turns and looks down the hall at the bathroom door. Doesn't want to go down there. But she has to.

INT. ISABELLE'S HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Mattie comes down the hall to the bathroom door and gives a gentle knock.

MATTIE
Izzie?

No reply.

Steam is billowing from under the door.

Mattie opens it and a WALL of STEAM BILLOWS out at her. She walks through that swirling vapor into the bathroom.

INT. ISABELLE'S BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Through the THICK FOG Mattie can see a DARK HUMAN FORM in the shower.

MATTIE
You all right, Iz?

No reply. No movement. It's creepy as hell. Mattie is no more than five feet away. There is somebody in that shower. She inches closer, letting herself believe that Isabelle might not have heard her over the running water.

MATTIE

Izzie?

No reply. No movement. But she can see, even clearer now, the HUMAN SHAPE through the glass door.

Taking the handle, she slides it open. And as the FOG THINS from the incoming draft, Mattie sees -

THE SHOWER IS EMPTY.

And something worse. On the white-tiles there is a HUMAN-SHAPED BLACK STAIN, like hundred-year-old mildew, or the bodily remains from some atomic blast.

INT. ISABELLE'S APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Mattie, in a panic, phone to her ear, pacing as it RINGS.

RECORDED VOICE

The voicemail box you have called
is full and cannot accept any more
incoming messages at this time.
Please try again later -

She hangs up, tries a different number. On the first RING -

RECORDED VOICE

The voicemail box you have called
is full and cannot accept any more
incoming messages -

Mattie grabs her student directory. Looking for a number.
Dials it. First RING -

RECORDED VOICE

The voicemail box you have called
is full and cannot accept any more
incoming messages at this time -

She hangs up, dials another number. First RING -

RECORDED VOICE

The voicemail box you have called
is full and cannot -

Hangs up, dials another, same outcome.

RECORDED VOICE
The voicemail box you have called -

Hangs up. Grim pause. Lets the directory fall closed.

EXT. CONVENIENCE STORE / GAS STATION - NIGHT

Dexter pumping gas, filling the Rambler's tank. His cell RINGS. He answers.

MATTIE (V.O.)
(filtered)
Where are you?!

DEXTER
(into phone)
I had to get gas.

He swipes his card through the slot. And the display screen says: GIVE CARD TO CASHIER

MATTIE (V.O.)
(filtered)
Hurry!

DEXTER
(into phone)
I fucking am!

He hangs up, runs inside the store.

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE / GAS STATION - NIGHT

Dexter comes in. Nobody behind the counter.

DEXTER
Hello...?

No reply.

But there's a CLANKING of BOTTLES from the coolers on the opposite side of the store, like somebody is in the back room restocking the shelves. Dexter calls -

DEXTER
Hey, can somebody help me out, I just got some gas...?

The CLANKING STOPS. No reply. Tense silence.

DEXTER

Hello...?

And now, through the coolers, Dexter sees SOMETHING coming, a DARK FIGURE MOVING BEHIND THE SHELVES of BEER and BEVERAGES.

Dexter starts backing out, watching the door to the back room. The figure appears there and steps into the light. And Dexter sees -

It's the STORE CLERK. Middle-Eastern. Deep-set eyes. A blank expression that's impossible to read. He crosses to the cash register. Dexter, relieved, steps to the counter, sets down his credit card.

DEXTER

Pump seven.

The clerk regards him for a moment with what looks like pity and then appears to reach for the credit card, but instead reaches UNDER THE COUNTER and takes out a HANDGUN which he puts under his chin and pulls the trigger.

BANG!

Blood sprays the cigarette display above the counter. The clerk drops. Dexter staggers backwards, mouth agape. His eyes instinctively go to the back room where he sees, lurking in the shadows, a DARK FIGURE.

It holds his stare for a moment and then its FEATURES JERK HORRIFICALLY FROM ONE SIDE OF ITS FACE TO THE OTHER, as if subjected to some violent centrifugal force.

Dexter crashes out the door, leaving his credit card on the counter. Blood dripping onto it from the cigarette display above.

EXT. CONVENIENCE STORE PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

As Dexter crosses the parking lot to his Rambler, there's a LOUD CRACKLING POP and an EXPLOSIVE FLASH from a utility pole transformer across the street. All the LIGHTS ON THE STREET GO OUT.

INT. RAMBLER - NIGHT

Dexter jumps in. Starts it, revs the engine. And then, sees in the rear view mirror -

SOMETHING IN THE BACK SEAT. Hideous. Waiting for him.

DEXTER

FUCK!

EXT. RAMBLER / CONVENIENCE STORE - NIGHT

Dexter dives from the Rambler, lands hard on the pavement, picks himself up and takes off on foot.

And we see him running away from the gas station down the middle of an abandoned street. The Rambler still idling there by the pumps.

INT. ISABELLE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Mattie, waiting, scanning the darkened corners of the apartment. It's too dark. She goes around and starts turning on the lights.

Turns on the tv, more for the light than anything else.

ON THE TV - a WEATHERMAN is running over a storm forming over the North Pacific. There's a weird HISSING CRACKLE, and the WEATHERMAN'S VOICE stops, then begins repeating itself in strange electronic fragments.

THE TV is SNAPPING intermittently. Each time it does the image on the screen jumps as if shocked. But even stranger, the Weatherman is semi-frozen, moving forward slightly, then jittering and going back to where he was and beginning again. And every third second or so, the entire upper half of his body disappears entirely. Not the upper portion of the picture. The weather map is still there. But the Weatherman's body simply vanishes above the jagged line crackling horizontally across the screen. Then reappears. Then disappears again.

Mattie switches channels.

ON THE TV - Dramatic news FOOTAGE plays with the SOUND OFF - The end of a high-speed chase, a car surrounded by police cruisers on some desolate highway. The caption - "Chase Ends In Tragedy".

We see the officers, guns drawn, ordering the driver to exit the vehicle. But he's not moving. He's just sitting behind the wheel. But now the door opens and the man gets out and starts walking at the police. You can see them pointing, ordering him to stop. But the driver keeps walking. Ignoring their commands. It's a suicide walk. The guns go off. The man falls.

A photo of the driver comes up on the screen.

DR WATERSON.

Shock heaped upon horror, Mattie grabs the remote. Presses the MUTE BUTTON. The SOUND GOES ON:

FEMALE NEWS ANCHOR (V.O.)
- the driver, identified as Dr.
Herman Waterson, was pronounced
dead at an area hospital.

Mattie SHUTS OFF THE TV.

With a sharp CLATTER an empty soda can on her computer table falls over. Nothing's touched it. It just falls over as if knocked by an invisible hand.

Mattie comes warily closer, sets it upright. A moment later, behind her, a BULB BLOWS with a hollow POP. She jumps -

MATTIE
Shit!

But she is scared of the wrong thing.

Because in that BLINDING BLUE FLASH of LIGHT we've seen what Mattie did not, SOMETHING standing in the shadow behind her, menacing, but not yet fully formed.

But perhaps she senses it, because she looks around now in tense silence.

And then all the other bulbs start to blow, going around the room like firecrackers - POP - POP - POP - POP - POP!

Mattie spins, watching it happen, backing into the center of the room, paralyzed in the sudden darkness.

The last bulb POPS and there's silence, total darkness, and it's then that she senses movement behind her. Turning, she sees -

SOMETHING HORRIBLE MANIFESTING ITSELF, MOVING TOWARD HER IN A BLUR OF MOTION!

She stumbles backwards. Makes a frantic run down the hall to the bedroom.

INT. ISABELLE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mattie runs in. SLAMS the door closed. Locks it. Runs over to her bed and grabs her bag. Digging frantically inside, she finds what she's looking for.

The rolls of RED TAPE.

So far past horror she's at the animal level, she runs back to the bedroom door and starts the fastest damned taping job you've ever seen in your life - RIIIIIIIP! SLAP! RIIIIIIIIIPPP! SLAPPPP! RRRRRRIIIIIIP!

Done, she steps away from the door, bug-eyed, hyperventilating, shaking like someone riding out an earthquake.

ON MATTIE - just enough light to see her eyes, filled with unspeakable terror.

She starts SEALING THE WINDOWS.

EXT. DARK ABANDONED STREET - NIGHT

Dexter running down an abandoned street. Nobody else in sight.

INT. ISABELLE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mattie, her face gleaming with tears, races from spot to spot in her darkened bedroom, squinting and feeling with her fingers for any openings in the walls or windows. A hole where a picture was hung, an electrical outlet, a crack in the plasters - each gets a square or strip of red tape.

Behind her in the gloom we see tape everywhere there was an outlet, a nick, a crack. She's leaving nothing to chance and the tape roll is nearly empty.

Her phone RINGS, lighting up in the dark. She lunges, grabbing it from the bed.

MATTIE
(into phone; unsure)
Hello?!

DEXTER (V.O.)
MATTIE, IS THAT YOU?!

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Dexter running, cell phone to his ear.

MATTIE (V.O.)
(pure terror)
DEXTER, OH MY GOD, HELP ME, THERE'S
SOMETHING IN HERE!

DEXTER
(into phone)
I'm coming!

We hear MATTIE'S VOICE FADING INTO STATIC in his ear.

DEXTER
(into phone)
Mattie?!

INT. ISABELLE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mattie yelling as Dexter's VOICE FADES TO STATIC -

MATTIE
(into phone; escalating
panic)
COME GET ME!

SILENCE. Signal lost.

Mattie hits REDIAL, but the display says: "Searching for Signal..." She tosses the phone on the bed.

Suddenly, Isabelle's COMPUTER BLINKS ON BEHIND HER, bathing the room in that icy, artificial light.

ON THE SCREEN - a STATIC VIEW OF A PORTION OF A ROOM. As before, we're LOOKING OVER A KEYBOARD AND DESK, AS IF DIRECTLY FROM THE COMPUTER'S MONITOR. Just past the keyboard and desk, the upper portion of the desk's CHAIR is visible.

As Mattie creeps slowly toward it, she sees...

ON THE SCREEN - Behind that chair someone is moving, a PALE FIGURE inching slowly toward the camera, peering out at her from the monitor, wanting out of the room she's in. A YOUNG WOMAN who Mattie now recognizes as...

HERSELF.

ON HER EYES - confused, terrified in a whole new way. The same EYES on the monitor, a digital mirror.

Mattie gives one of those little waves you give when you catch yourself on a security monitor somewhere and want to be sure it's really you.

And then the CAMERA CHANGES POV, showing Mattie from the side, leaning over the computer - as though she's being watched by something INSIDE THE ROOM.

Mattie spins, eyes flitting back and forth from the monitor the room, trying to orient herself to the angle she's being watched from.

And now she sees it, the one small opening she overlooked, the POV she is being watched from -

THE KEYHOLE.

She grabs a roll of tape and lunges for it.

Too late.

SOMETHING IS POURING ITSELF THROUGH THAT HOLE, like a wisp of smoke, a NEBULOUS DARK FORM taking shape right in front of her.

She backs away, mouth falling open in terror, trapped in here with it, all the exits sealed.

She runs to the window and starts clawing at the tape with her fingernails, peeling it away in ribbons.

EXT. ISABELLE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Dexter runs up to Isabelle's apartment, screaming -

DEXTER
MATTIE?!

She screams back.

MATTIE
HELP ME!

Dexter follows the sound of her screams to the side of the building, bangs on the window right behind her, trying to pry open the window with his fingers.

But he can't. It's welded shut with tape.

DEXTER
GET OUT OF THERE!

INT. ISABELLE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mattie inside frantically peeling the tape away. Fingers trembling. Barely able to get a grip as -

MORE DARK FORMS POUR THROUGH THE KEYHOLE. A DOZEN OF THEM SWARMING IN THE BLACKNESS AROUND HER!

And as they come for her, Mattie tears the last piece of tape away and throws the window open and hurls herself out.

EXT. ISABELLE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Dexter catches her. And as they run off down the street...

EXT. A STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Mattie and Dexter run out of the night, stopping, gasping, unable to run another step.

Then Dexter sees something -

DEXTER
Look!

IN THEIR POV - ONE OF THE SCHOOL'S SHUTTLE BUSES - pulled over half a block away, engine idling. They take off running for it as the bus starts to pull away.

DEXTER

Hey! Wait!

The bus lurches to a stop as they get nearer.

AT THE BUS - Dexter and Mattie at the door -

DEXTER

Thanks, man! We...

There's no one on the bus. Its front wheel is wedged into the curb in such a way that the idling engine breaks it free every so often, and the bus grinds forward a couple of feet until it gets stuck against the curb again. But there's no one driving.

DEXTER

Come on.

INT. SHUTTLE BUS - NIGHT

Dexter climbs behind the wheel, Mattie coming up the steps behind him, scanning the empty seats just to make sure they're empty.

And she catches herself against one as the bus suddenly lurches forward, going over the curb and off down the street, Dexter's foot jammed against the accelerator.

INT. SHUTTLE BUS - MOMENTS LATER

Dexter randomly flipping switches on the dash as he drives, looking for the right ones to turn off -

THE HEADLIGHTS - GO OFF.

He flips another switch and -

THE INTERIOR LIGHTS - GO OFF.

They cruise along in total darkness. The DIESEL ENGINE the only sound we hear.

Mattie sitting zombielike, emotional overload.

Her cell phone RINGS. Dexter's response is immediate -

DEXTER
Don't answer it.

It RINGS AGAIN. Mattie takes it from her pocket.

DEXTER
Do - not - answer - that!

When it RINGS the third time, she flips it open, bringing it slowly to her ear.

MATTIE
(into phone; scared)
Hello...?

Through STATIC, the faintest trace of a voice can be heard, a FEMALE VOICE.

MATTIE
(into phone)
Hello?!
(to Dexter; urgent)
Stop, I can't hear.

DEXTER
Are you kidding me?! No way!

MATTIE
FUCKING STOP!

Beat. Dexter jams on the brakes. The bus SQUEALS to a halt.

Mattie palm-punches the button that activates the door and the door scissors open. Down the steps she goes.

DEXTER
Where are you going?!

EXT. SHUTTLE BUS - CONTINUOUS

Phone to her ear, Mattie steps away from the bus, trying to listen over the DIESEL ENGINE NOISE.

MATTIE
 (into phone)
 Who is this...?!

Distancing herself, she can hear the VOICE crying out to her.

ISABELLE (V.O.)
 (crying; through static)
 Maaaatttieeee...

Her heart stops.

MATTIE
 (into phone)
 Izzie?! Where are you?!

ISABELLE (V.O.)
 (crying; through static)
 ...I don't know...It's dark...

MATTIE
 (into phone)
 Where are you?! Tell me where you
 are!!

ISABELLE (V.O.)
 (crying; through static)
 Maaaatttieeee...

As Mattie scrambles back toward the bus, the STATIC INTENSIFIES. She registers this and quickly reverses direction, the STATIC LESSENING as moves back away from the bus, her EYES glued to -

THE CELL PHONE DISPLAY - where the signal-strength icon adds one FLICKERING BAR - the signal growing faintly stronger.

Mattie's gaze lifts from her cell phone to the signal's apparent origin - off through that dark treeline.

CAMPUS.

All the while, Isabelle has been crying in her ear, and Dexter screaming at her from the driver's seat -

DEXTER
 Get on! Let's go!

MATTIE
 It's Izzie!

DEXTER
No, it's not!

MATTIE
It's coming from campus!

DEXTER
There's nothing back there!

ISABELLE (V.O.)
(crying through static)
Maaatttiiee help...

MATTIE
(to Dexter)
Wait for me.

And before Dexter even reply she races off, heading back toward the heart of campus. Dexter screaming at her from the idling bus -

DEXTER
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!!

EXT. CAMPUS / SIDEWALK / BUILDING - NIGHT

Mattie running alone across the dark campus, scared as hell.

MATTIE'S POV AS SHE RUNS - trees, bushes, shadows, buildings, all of it whipping past in a blur.

BACK TO SCENE

Mattie turns left past a building, checking her cell phone -

ON THE DISPLAY - A SIGNAL BAR DISAPPEARS.

Shit. Wrong way. She reverses direction.

ON THE DISPLAY - THE BAR REAPPEARS.

She takes off down the sidewalk, her cell phone a makeshift homing device.

EXT. TREE-LINED SIDEWALK - NIGHT

Leafless branches passing overhead, Mattie runs down a tree-lined sidewalk, stopping right in front of us now, trying to catch her breath, as -

ON THE CELL PHONE DISPLAY - ANOTHER BAR IS ADDED.

The signal at half-strength. She looks up at where it's coming from -

And there is the COMMUNICATIONS BUILDING. Haunted-looking, cast in unyielding shadows.

INT. COMMUNICATIONS BUILDING - NIGHT

Mattie bursts in. Stops, looks around, orienting herself for a moment.

The ground floor is full of partitioned cubicles. Pitch black. The only light is from the EXIT SIGNS and the bluish-green glow of her cell phone, which paints a fuzzy circle of light on the floor where she's standing.

She runs through the darkened cubicles, wary of what can't be seen, crossing to the ELEVATOR on the opposite side.

She hits the button. The doors don't open.

No power. She turns, see the door for the STAIRS.

INT. STAIRS - NIGHT

Mattie throws open the door and pauses on the threshold, staring up the darkened stairs.

And then goes charging up, footsteps echoing in the hollows. But stops mid-flight as she sees -

ON THE DISPLAY - A BAR DISAPPEARS.

She's going the wrong way.

The right way is DOWN. She peers over the railing.

MATTIE'S POV - the stairs receding into total darkness.

And as she starts down the stairs into that endless darkness below...

INT. FLIGHT OF STAIRS - MOMENTS LATER

FOOTSTEPS echoing hollow on the stairs, Mattie descends. We see the signal getting stronger by increments and, by those same increments, ISABELLE'S VOICE getting clearer.

MATTIE
(into phone)
Are you still there? I'm coming...

ISABELLE (V.O.)
(crying; through static)
Get me out of here...

Mattie reaches the bottom of the steps, throws open the door in front of her.

INT. SERIES OF BASEMENT CORRIDORS - NIGHT

Pitch black. Labyrinthian. Mattie illuminates the winding corridor with the glow from her cell phone - a homing device and now a flashlight as well.

She reaches the end of a corridor where it T-intersects with another. She turns left.

ON THE CELL PHONE DISPLAY - the signal weakens.

She heads the other way, quickening her pace, the signal nearing full strength.

At the end of this corridor -

ON THE CELL PHONE DISPLAY - THE LAST BAR APPEARS. SIGNAL AT FULL-STRENGTH.

She brings the phone to her ear. All the static is gone. A crystal clear connection.

MATTIE
(into phone)
Isabelle?

ISABELLE (V.O.)
I'm right here...

Mattie turns, looking for the origin in dark, can't see anything -

MATTIE
(into phone)
Where...?

ISABELLE (V.O.)
Here...

And we hear a HOLLOW POUNDING NOISE from just up ahead.
Mattie hurries that way, and it leads her to...

A CLOSED DOOR.

Mattie tries the door handle. It's locked. She pounds on it.

MATTIE
(into phone)
Is this you?

And there is no reply.

MATTIE
(into phone)
Izzie, is this you?

She pounds again on the door. And after a moment SOMEBODY
POUNDS BACK FROM THE OTHER SIDE.

Mattie takes a sudden involuntarily step backwards as the
DOOR UNLOCKS with a LOUD METALLIC CLUNK.

She waits for it to open.

But it doesn't. She comes back to it and takes hold of the
handle. Turning. The latch CLICKING as it comes free.

INT. A DARK ROOM - NIGHT

We're looking at the door from the darkness on the other side
as it inches open toward us. A slice of Mattie's face
visible through the crack, her voice issuing through -

MATTIE
Izzie...?

No reply.

CLOSE ON THAT SLICE OF MATTIE'S FACE - HER TERRIFIED EYE peering in at us.

She opens the door wider. Staring into the BLACKNESS on the other side. And realizes by now the mistake she's made.

MATTIE

Iz...?

Silence. And then something worse.

The sound of FOOTSTEPS approaching, scuffing the floor, but without the weight of human steps, and slower than any living person could walk, more of dragging sound.

And from the darkness in front of her, we can see a FIGURE MATERIALIZING.

MATTIE

Izzie...?

But she knows it's not Isabelle even before she asks.

It is the FIGURE FROM THE BUS. Broad-shouldered. No neck to speak of.

As it approaches, the FACE takes shape. The face we saw printed, but far more menacing in three-dimensions. Translucent. Almost molten, the features swimming in the oddest, creepiest way.

Beyond terror, Mattie just stands there, trying to fathom this sinister, other-worldly thing she's looking at.

MATTIE

What...do...you...want...?

The figure leans into the focal plane of Mattie's perception and its LEERING BLACK EYES BECOME RAZOR-SHARP. Its mouth slowly gapes open and the sound that comes out is strange and horrific - a static-laced regurgitation of DISEMBODIED HUMAN VOICES - STARTING WITH ISABELLE'S -

DARK FIGURE

(lips not moving)

Oh my God Mattie, help me...

TIM'S VOICE OVERLAPPING NOW -

DARK FIGURE
(lips not moving)
Yeah, I'm fine... Yeah, I'm fine...

And then hundreds of other DISEMBODIED DIGITAL VOICES, overlapping to create an auditory chaos of human conversation, some of it mundane, other voices desperate, confused, crying out for help.

And, strangely, the sound seems to be coming from more than just one location, more than just one source...

Mattie raises the cell phone to illuminate the darkness around her and sees -

FIFTY OR SIXTY FIGURES APPROACHING IN THE PITCH BLACK - FACES HIDEOUSLY SKEWED, MOUTHS GAPING!

And when she centers her vision again - the figure from the bus is there, right in front of her. Its ELONGATED FINGERS extending...

CLOSE ON MATTIE'S FACE - EYES WIDE. QUICK SHALLOW BREATHS. Her PULSE visible in her neck, the VEINS standing out like cords.

There's nowhere for her to go, the door closed behind her. And as those fingers close around Mattie's neck, just a hair's breadth away from her skin -

SHE GETS PULLED SHARPLY BACKWARDS, GRABBED FROM BEHIND BY -

DEXTER!!

They tumble backwards into the opening outside the door. Dexter grabs her in his fists, practically throwing her onto her feet.

DEXTER
DON'T LOOK, JUST RUN!

INT. BASEMENT CORRIDORS - CONTINUOUS

The two of them running blind and making wrong turns and tripping over unseen obstacles as they tear a path through the labyrinth that is the basement of this building.

INT. FIRE STAIRS, COMMUNICATIONS BUILDING - NIGHT

Mattie and Dexter running up the stairs from the basement. They reach the ground floor and Dexter opens the door to exit, but Mattie runs past, continuing her climb.

DEXTER
Where are you going?!

She pauses, glancing back.

MATTIE
It's coming from here! It has to be!

A moment and then Dexter realizes -

DEXTER
The roof.

Mattie nods and charges on, Dexter following.

They race up ten flights of those echoing metal fire stairs. A dizzying ascent, spiraling up into the pitch black.

At the top there is a door that says ROOF ACCESS - AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL ONLY.

Mattie pushes through.

EXT. ROOF OF COMMUNICATIONS BUILDING - NIGHT

The door swings open and Mattie and Dexter emerge onto the roof - which offers a panoramic view of the campus and surrounding city. But they aren't looking at the view.

They're looking up at something high above, with a mixture of awe and dread -

A fifty-foot RADIO TOWER looming above them - monolithic, a latticework of steel silhouetted against the gathering dusk. A small red light pulsing at the top.

As they approach, Dexter takes hold of Mattie's arm, stopping her from coming any closer.

DEXTER

Listen.

Mattie stops.

And you can actually hear the tower sizzling, like a high-voltage transformer run amok, frying the air with SHIMMERING WAVES of ELECTROSTATIC ENERGY.

DEXTER

Come on, it's too late.

Dexter heads back to the access door. Mattie following.

EXT. COMMUNICATIONS BUILDING / CAMPUS - NIGHT

Mattie and Dexter emerge from the building and run off across the campus. He has her by the hand, keeping her pace up.

They don't look at each other. They don't say anything. They just run.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAYBREAK

City streets in eerie silence. The blue halflight before dawn.

A bicycle lies on its side in the middle of a sidewalk. A car is doubleparked with its driver-side door open and its hazard lights flashing - dimly, very slowly, the battery is almost dead.

A few dozen PIGEONS are perched COOING on the arched crossbeam that holds a traffic light above a vacant intersection.

All at once they take flight, wheeling skyward, wings CLAPPING in the silence as...

The shuttle bus ROARS past.

INT. SHUTTLE BUS - CONTINUOUS

Dexter behind the wheel. Mattie in the front seat beside him. Haunted looks on their faces as they peer out the windows.

MATTIE'S POV -

Through the glass, through Mattie's own ghostly reflection, we see PATCHES of RED going by on the street. Just the color at first, passing in a dreary dreamlike blur, the world itself out of focus.

Slowly, as we pull back, the scenery outside the bus resolves, the patches of color taking shape as RED SQUARES and RECTANGLES - SEALED DOORS and WINDOWS lining both sides of the street.

Private homes. Apartment buildings. Elementary schools. High-rise condominiums. Everything is swathed in red.

From the back of the bus, looking down the aisle through the windshield - with Mattie and Dexter silhouetted against it - we can see the FULL LENGTH OF THE ROAD, perhaps a half mile into the distance.

Only now do we see the full scope of the devastation. There is such an abundance of RED SQUARES that the WHOLE CITY has taken on an EERIE CRIMSON TINGE.

DEXTER

We'll look back on this someday and
laugh our asses off.

Gallows humor. Neither of them knows what else to say.

Just then, the last thing either of them expected, Mattie's cell phone RINGS.

Dexter's eyes snap to Mattie and hers snap to him, haunted - who the fuck is that?!

She takes the phone from her pocket, an object of fear.

Gives it a look. Drops it out the window.

EXT. CITY STREET - CONTINUOUS

The cell phone tumbles to a stop against the trash-strewn curb.

CLOSE UP ON THE DISPLAY - "Private Caller..."

RING.

RING.

INT. SHUTTLE BUS - CONTINUOUS

Peppering the walls of some of the passing buildings are those same stark black HUMAN SMUDGES. But what's lurking in the shadows of the dead city is far more ominous -

TRANSLUCENT FACES, hideously askew, peering out, watching the bus go past.

MATTIE

How much gas we have left?

DEXTER

Half tank.

MATTIE

How far's that get us?

DEXTER

We're gonna find out.

Dexter makes a sharp turn, cutting diagonally across another vacant intersection toward a freeway onramp.

EXT. CITY HIGHWAY - DAYBREAK

The shuttle bus speeds up the onramp, swerves into the empty lane in front of us and accelerates off down the abandoned six-lane highway.

INT. SHUTTLE BUS - LATER

Gas gauge on empty, Dexter turns into the parking lot of a gas station near a freeway offramp. He and Mattie survey the lot as they pull up to the pumps. It's abandoned.

EXT. SHUTTLE BUS / GAS STATION - DAY

Dexter jams the gas nozzle in the tank, starts it filling. Mattie has come down the steps behind him, looking around. She sees something off in the distance. It holds her stare. Dexter turns and sees it as well.

They both wear the same doomed expression.

Up ahead in the distance, looming above the next town, is a MASSIVE RADIO TOWER, frying the air with visible pulses of electromagnetic energy, sparking flashes of heat lightning in the black clouds above. At the very top, a light blinks RED in the gloom of the new day.

MATTIE

It's everywhere, isn't it?

Dexter says nothing. They both jump when the gas nozzle CLICKS OFF behind them. Dexter takes it from the tank and gets back on the bus.

INT. SHUTTLE BUS - DAY

Mattie follows him up the steps. Hammers the button. The doors snap shut behind her.

MATTIE

What are we gonna do?

Dexter puts the bus into gear, bringing it back up to speed.

DEXTER

Drive.

FADE OUT.